

POETRY
A MAGAZINE OF VERSE
VOLUME LII

oetry

A Magazine of Verse

Founded by Harriet Monroe

VOLUME LII

April - September, 1938



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CHICAGO

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ERRATA

Page 45, line 8 For *Albert's* read *Altola-*
guerre's.
Page 85: Stanza division after line 12. No space
between lines 13 and 14
Page 186: Stanza division after line 12.
Page 245, line 36: For *Alestis* read *Alcestis*
Page 278, lines 27-28: For *Macleish* read *MacLeish*

Poetry

A Magazine of Verse

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there must be great audiences too

Whitman

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To these, who have remained loyal to POETRY and its purposes over many years; to the Friday Club and Society of Midland Authors, who have donated prizes and other benefits; and particularly to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, whose generous gifts have enabled POETRY to continue, the editors of the magazine wish to express their appreciation and that of the poets we have published.

The death of Henry J. Patten, which occurred on February 24, is a severe loss to the cultural life of his community. He was a guarantor of POETRY from its earliest years and a good friend of its founder. Since her death he had been an active member of our Financial Committee, working to raise funds for the perpetuation of the magazine.

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LII

NO. I

APRIL 1938

TWO POEMS

MILWAUKEE AVENUE

ASPHERING sky, like a drop curtain hangs
Over, behind red buildings—a dome of blue
Up here above Milwaukee Avenue,
Where snow flies and the blast harangues.

Down in the Loop the forty storey spire
Proves how the old days are estranged;
Nothing much here is changed,
This street escaped the Fire.

This is a part of Norway, Germany,
Where markets, stores and local advocats,
Where restaurants and stove-heated flats
Remain much as they used to be.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

The same broad faces walk here as of yore;
Polish and Swedish voices can be heard,
And racket from the pavement, stirred
By trucks, by carts from door to door.

Here in the market window is half a steer
Hanging with sheep all frosted by dressed fowls;
Here the sign creaks, as winter howls,
Here are warm rooms for wine and beer.

All this transports the memory, and remakes
The past into the present, as in a dream
One walks here, smelling steam
Of coffee, pork and cakes.

But how this zero weather through leather nips
The hands, and stings uncovered ears,
And brings to eyes the tears,
And flaps a coat about the hips!

One's face grows redder than a winter haw,
And from one's nose hang icicles.
To push against this blast soon tells
In frozen cheeks, blood raw.

Into some near saloon then: here is one.
It is the same as in the former days:
The sanded floor, the mirror, the displays
Of bottles, and the quaint orchestration;

Edgar Lee Masters

The cuckoo clock with rusted weights and chains,
The paintings of Andromeda and Bismarck,
Or Tam O'Shanter, flying the cuttysark,
The marbled frost upon the window panes;

The cannon stove on which a kettle seethes,
And the warm corner where
The drunkard sleeps, whose care
Is drugged, who snores, who deeply breathes.

The bowl of Tom and Jerry on the bar,
The cheese and ham, the beef, free lunch,
Which one can leisurely munch,
And smoke a strong cigar,

And talk meanwhile to the bartender, worn
From years here; yet to ask and find
He cannot bring to mind
Gus Lenke or John Horn.

JAKE MANN

I'm sending here Jake Mann's obituary,
About a half a column in the *News*,
Printed this week, as you will see.
Note that it mentions he was eighty-four,
And a lawyer of prominence, whose
Career stretched back to fifty years and more,
And that he was a wondrous orator

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

On the stump, and used to go
To national conventions, used to frame
The platforms of his party—note all this,
And that he had a state-wide fame.
Note it, but you know how to look below
These lifeless things, and see the writer wrote
By copying stuff, and didn't know
What Jake Mann was, could only quote
From the history of the county of Bureau.

He was a stalwart man. His massive head
Rested on broad shoulders, and he walked
Straight as a soldier with a lawyer's pride.
He looked right at you when he talked
With ashes in which the embers were half dead.
But he talked little in this his eventide.
His manner seemed to say he knew
Wisdoms that words could not communicate,
Or wisdoms that our generations wouldn't
Understand or care for or tolerate.
It seemed at times he wanted to speak, but couldn't.
He acted like a philosopher who has come,
Long after death, from traveling other spheres,
And goes about just looking, and who's dumb,
Choked with rich reasons out of tested years.

He looked as if he knew that many words
Would be but mist trying to catch blackbirds,

Edgar Lee Masters

Or net a summer fly;
And that few words would so condense
His sum of things that they would not supply
Meaning to any lesser intelligence.
So he told funny stories, and drank much booze
All day at the bar of Sandy Hughes.

When the War roared his eyes just said, "oh, yes."
When later at Sandy's bar
Talk ran of communism, of the distress
Of the country, he just looked and smiled.
You will observe this notice mentions
None of these things, nor how he whiled
Full four years at the bar of Sandy Hughes,
Sitting and looking, drinking booze.

He may have thought of his Chicago days,
When the city called him, and he made
Money and wider reputation, or
Of those days here long years before
When he was ablest, wittiest lawyer, paid
Of all our lawyers here the highest fees.
There sitting with drink on drink,
(And he could drink twenty or thirty ryes),
He may have wondered how after a long career
He could be here again, silent and wise,
In his old home town.
He didn't seem to grieve, to think

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

About his past, that he was down.
He was a wise mahatma who had lived
All things, and after living them had survived.

This article doesn't say,
Though people say so here,
That Jake just drank his life away
At Sandy Hughes', year after year.
He didn't. For he was nearly eighty when
He came back from Chicago, and returned
To practice in the law here once again.
Four years of drink! He should have taught
In Sunday School, some moralists
Around here say, or given interviews,
Made talks, done something which assists
People to live, instead of drinking booze
In the old saloon of Sandy Hughes.

Why didn't he read a book?
Why did he sit and drink and look?
What did he have thereby?
I think he had Nirvana in that way,
Thinking of truths he couldn't say,
And mulling wisdoms over to allay
Pain from the wonder he was soon to die.
Edgar Lee Masters

KRISTIN'S SONG

Poor, my dear,
Here at the last,
Thy follies overpast,
Here on this breast,
Though riven it thou hast,
Shed thy last tear . . .
Lie down and rest.

Knowest thou not
What vows were said
With quivering maidenhead?
Spirit it was, 'twas taken:
No bridegroom, no bride-bed,
No strain, no blot
That vow has shaken.

Still thy fear;
There is no haste,
Thou chastened and I chaste . . .
Death may the cleric be
Whose sacrament to taste
Whose wine so clear
Binds thee to me.

Jean Starr Untermeyer

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THREE POEMS

ST. URSANNE

Leaving the viaduct on the left, and coming over the hill,
We came to a small town, four towers at the corners,
The streets narrow and not dark,
The children playing in green gardens by the waterside.

Was it at the Swan or the White Horse that we stopped?
We walked up to the church and the stone cloister,
Grass growing among the tangle of votive ribbons,
The wax flowers and the twisted wire.

We heard the town-crier ringing a bell under the town
clock—
Something about a wandering cow and a job for a waggoner,
Then we looked at the watermill by the stone bridge,
And went back for a Cointreau or a Cinzano.

That was at Eastertide, and the fields and meadows
Mellow with cowslips: there were boys on bicycles
With bandoliers of jonquils, and there was an old lady
With a basket of primroses and violets.

Michael Roberts

It was a quiet town, and not yet broken,
The people kindly, and the priest 'a good one as priests go',
There was a football team, and a lad who enters from the
country in the morning,
Singing: Ohé Oh, Ohé Oh!

BONNEVAL

A thousand generations cannot build this valley
Into the friendly valley of our fathers,
Longer than history our reproach will stand,
What we have done, we cannot mend.

Starved cattle graze on the bare hill,
Brown streams fall in the narrow gorge,
Earth runs like sand from unprotected ledges,
What we have done, we cannot mend.

Here the sheep-track is broken, here the chalet
Gives up its darkness to the encroaching sun,
Earth slides with the naked roots and rotten stumps,
What we have done, we cannot mend.

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VOICES OF EARTH AND AIR

Voices of earth and air speak hollow thoughts,
Their words finger the nerves and the frightened pulse;
Thoughts without body, feeling without love,
Cry suddenly in the night, and one cries out:

"Oh, but they are gnawing at me,
I am part of the world again;
Voices speak in me that are not myself,
And will not let me sleep or let me wake.

"Oh, but those mummified ones that cannot die,
They crawl into my ears, into my soul,
They speak with my foreign lips and think my thought,
And this is death for me, and worse than living.

"Come, let me die, or give me back my world,
Give me a small thing that I knew,
Give me a smile, or a sudden phrase in music;
I am lost, I am the lost and damned."

Michael Roberts

NIGHT JOURNEY

As we rode the lean white highway through the dark,
Hearing the motor-song, the heavy whisper of tires
On concrete, and were lulled and put at peace
Beneath the benevolent brooding stream of telephone wires,
Suddenly we saw at the stony margin of the road
A moving flash, as of thousands of turquoise fires.
These were the eyes of spiders marching evenly—
A fragile tide advancing on brittle feet,
Huddled for courage, unhaltingly paced to meet
The fury of the night with equal wrath.
And yet another headlight, hours from now,
Will catch their glow but little farther down the path.

Unthinking and savage race, aware of man,
Stirred by the norther of his headlong flight,
Stung by the quick dust from his flying wheels,
Rejectful of his schemes yet giving dumb salute
As they turn unflinching jeweled eyes to his light—
A proud and bitter caravan they press together
Making their level way beside his road of stone,
Far-flung across their mapless green abodes,
Serving as dark a purpose of their own.

Richard Leon Spain

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THE WILLOW TREE

I know not lovelier
Than a Willow Tree
That is of a still water
Contemplate endlessly.
Though in a churchyard were
That vision, yet 'twould be
Defiled not even there
Of this mortality.

Whereas Olivia's
Beauty of demoiselle
Her threefold looking-glass
Binds in a darkling spell.
See hooded Shadow pass
As down a prison cell,
Whispering, "Sister, alas!"
'Twixt graces multiple.

They phantom are that wait,
Foregathering Death's sheaf,
On beauty animate,
Be its span long or brief:

Anne Young

The maid who lovely.sate
To her mirror beckoned Grief
'Twould seem. Vital as delicate,
Th' insensate Willow leaf.

Deep down the crystal well
Youth fleeting, shadow-caught,
Hear sighing like the shell.
All rhythm of our thought
Breathes elegy; who tell
Of mortal beauty aught,
Sound but a graveside bell
Their word hath wrought—

While, out of Robin's throat
Rejoice the Spirit's ear
Grace-note to sweet grace-note
Telling of beauty clear,
From mortal pain remote,
Unsullied all of fear,
Where Willow vestments float,
Cool, silvered, to the mere.
Anne Young

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DEATH OF HERCULES

I rest upon the earth I comprehend.
Under these windy leaves and fertile mists,
This cold infinity of grass and sea exists:
Visible war and movement without end.

Out of a season's ruin, these thin blooms;
Out of the lamb's dark blood, a new-born beast;
And from extinguished stars, an autumn feast:
Men bring the future with them from the tombs.

In agony, in joy of strength, like me,
They cut eternal heads that are regrown
On burning snakes: and a new world is known:
The heart is cleared from wrestling with the sea.

And though consumed in deaths they cannot know,
White-lipped in dread of everlasting birth,
They fly the loud advancing of the earth,
Its avid hollow, its resurge and flow,

I lean my strength against my father's love:
Enormous gift of immortality,
Impending distant like a huge green sea,
Now like a great wind gathering above,

Whose weight I would hold from me as I bore
The sky tumultuous with birds and fire.

Edwin Morgan

But I shall be consumed in his desire,
Burnt in his thought and to return no more,

Flesh capable of death and war again,
Man with the uncoiled snake beneath his foot,
Forever laboring for the golden fruit,
Thrust back to time, and excellent in pain.

Edwin Morgan

DARK MOTHER

Not you, proud Miriam of Bethlehem,
Could know the full, dark measure of their grief
Who lifted from that other cross the thief;
And you of Magdala whom none condemn,
What comfort is in your stilled heart for them,
Those little hearts that from the dust in brief
Young agony cry out their unbelief
When love has turned from loving to contempt?
To what dark mother shall they lift their prayers,
Wise in the arid wisdom of old pain,
Compassionate of those too poor for loss,
Who are bereft of what was never theirs—
Who break some little precious box in vain,
And lift no shining godhead from their cross?

Dorothy Paul

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FOUR SONGS

I

Hesperus, the gentlest star,
Where no human wishes are,
Where no mortal hungers go
Lets his cool perceptions flow:
On the nightless Russian bays
Hears the bells of vanished sleighs,
Sees the furclad traitor rise
From his frozen paradise,
Sheds his mild solicitude
Where the sickened exile stood;
Calms but never can forgive
Those who lost the wish to live,
Blinded travelers on the slope
Who at last abandoned hope,
Broken heroes who must praise
Such an ending to their days;
Blesses but cannot restore
Those whom love drove forth to war:
Pillars on the boundless sand
From a cooling hand.

Frederic Prokosch

II

Living and dying, hoping and despairing,
We watch the winter tear away the flower:
O do not say too much, be not unkind,
For Europe's grieving in her burning tower.

I still recall the straight and twilit limbs,
The forest pool, the young and echoing power;
Their thighs are locked, their lips are dry of kisses
And Europe's grieving in her burning tower.

Play softly, black musicians! for the midnight
Flies westward with the dying of the hour,
Cities are flaming, traitors line the shores
And Europe's trembling in her burning tower.

III

O the vines were golden, the birds were loud,
The orchard showered, the honey flowed,
The Venice glasses were full of wine,
The women were geese and the men were swine,

And the lamp then flickered over the door,
And the gulls went screaming along the shore,

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And the wolf crept down from the milkwhite hill
And the stars lay bright in the frozen well:

O my world, o what have you done to me?
For my love has turned to a laurel tree,
The axe hangs trembling over the Isles,
The Lyre has loosened her flaming miles,

And the door is locked and the key is lost
And the gulls lie stiffening in the frost
And the drifting snow is tracked with blood
And my love lies cold in the burning wood.

IV

Let the beast be chained, let the sorrow be forgotten!
Let the marble towers leap wildly into the air.
Let Sibelius repeat for the sick his immense despair,
Let the powder and rouge disguise what is sick and rotten

Let the looking glass answer our sensitive fernlike faces,
Let the feast be laid for the idiot and the thief,
Let the lover in anguish fly to the loneliest reef,
Let the architect build latrines in the ancient places,

Frederic Prokosch

Let our dreams of peace go flitting through China like elves,
Let the troops stream past the idyllic Mantuan farm,
Let the stars be anatomized, let the comets swarm,
Let Catullus and Dante shrivel and die on their shelves,

Let the galleries reel with the lunatic palette and easel,
Let the music go billowing over the stormy seas,
Let the snow be spangled with beautiful girls on skis,
Let Africa creep through our lyrics and loves like a weasel,

Let roses be strewn for the murderess in the hall,
Let the crimson pyjamas flower on all the beaches,
Let the burglar's orchard shimmer with pears and peaches,
Let the scholar sigh, let the heavenly statue fall,

O hurry, hurry! Explore your marvellous day;
No time for the heart to love and the mind to know!
For the skies will roar and the passionate blood will flow
And the long night pack our lunatic joys away,

Frederic Prokosch

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THIS IS THE SEASON

Here in the early dusk, in a warm room lit
Only by the insatiate flames sucking the dry bough
On the hearth, silent save for the snap and spit
Of the fire and the fingers of winter at the pane
Tapping . . . tapping . . . here if never again
Peace wins the heart, claiming its ardent vow.

This is the hour of the mind, as the body rests
In the arms of warmth, shut in and secure
From lean-jawed evils that slink on treacherous quests
Through the nameless dark.
(Listen! The flint on flint of mind and the precious spark
Leaps to the shavings . . . blow . . . and the heart is sure.)

This is the winter, the season of talk and sleep,
Contentment with roof and the sturdy thickness of walls . . .
Be not deceived, my heart! Soon the twilight falls
Less early, the cat grows restless, and strange excitements
creep
Into the air . . . Where is peace now and its quiet pledge?
The sun laughs! Robins strut! And grass, in a sharp green
wedge,
Assails the retreating snow.

Let them go,

Kathleen Sutton

All the philosophies, the delusions of safety, the sterile desire
for content.

Let them run with the melting ice, flooding the gutters, spent
At last in the sea . . . For the heart is song,
Giddy, gone mad if you will, with the challenging mirth
Of April. Oh, terribly wrong
Seems the winter now, with its bleak defiance of earth.

Kathleen Sutton

INVOCATION FOR A BOOK

Saint Barnabas had no art to tell
Our Lady that he loved her well.
And so he stood upon his head
And juggled plates (as he knew how):
And She, who was the Queen of Heaven,
Whom far more costly gifts were given,
Smiled and was pleased, and touched his brow.

Good Saint, now pray for me and bless
These rhymes not juggled skilfully:
Pray, that perhaps my clumsiness
Will make Our Lady smile at me.

Henry Rago

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TWO POEMS

A FLAMINGO'S EGG

See how it is teed up on the nest, enabling
My fancy to whack it down the fairway of the future.
Hatched, growing its own wings, it soars
Over the barren bunkers of commonsense
And the despicable water-hazards of apathy, until—
Dizzily winning—it dips for the piscine hole.

Now I am standing them all a drink: they are all
Bibbers at the bar of beauty, their ears sprouting
Tentacles that suck me dry. The central figure
In this vicarious beauty-snatching, I stand aloof
Nonchalantly surveying the naïve and enjoy my triumph.

RAGS OF TIME

"Hours, days, months which are the rags of time."

Donne

If rags, I'll harvest them and boil
The contaminating soil
From their fibres and attain
The naked residue again.

Terence Heywood

I shall shake and mat the stuff
Into paper smooth and tough
That will make an aquatint,
Beauty from a lazar-squint.

I shall dig the rags of time
From the misbegotten slime,
Nor ever beg them in the street—
There are too many at my feet.

Terence Heywood

IN FLOOD

Smoothly they swim among the chairs and tables,
Staring with sad eyes fixed in unsurprise;
Dapple her garments with their shadowy passing,
And brush her lips with fins as soft as sighs.
Silver and opal in the fluid dimness,
Their living garlands blossom where she lies.

Elizabeth F. Griffin

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ANNUAL LEGEND

A million butterflies rose up from South America
All together and flew in a gold storm toward Spain:
Eastward, the annual legend, a shining cloud of amber
Driven homeward as it had been (and would be again)
Since the conquerors searching a harder shining
Brought for the bargain a handful of wings of flame.

Balboa is somewhere scattered and Pizarro's helmet
Is a spider's kingdom; yet here was the arrogant breath
And the dangerous plume burning across the foreign air
That danced like an ancient Andalusian noon:
A blaze, it rose leaving the jungle dark and the leaves
Heavy with silence, and the wheeltracks folding to doom
Where majesty wandered:

A million butterflies,
Wheeling eastward from the soil where the nugget lies lost,
Turned homeward in vast diurnal fire that marched one day
Burning toward Spain; and after that, for awhile,
Spread like a field of death gold on the sea.

Winfield Townley Scott

FIVE POEMS

THE BRIGHT PREY

Pheasant, prince in your intricate home of twig and bough,
Despiser of the dull ground, whose airy estates
Are soundless, wide, in light, move one concealing leaf
And the gun will speak from the umbrage.

Your feathers, tapering tier into dappled tier
From your reared head to the final scimitar of your tail,
Shine softly in the green sun
As you sit motionless in the unreality of fear.

Dominate the finger on the unseen lock.
Brood down the booted prowler who kneels before you
Only to see you beat your wings in blood and fall
Throbbing upon the ground, your crest in stones.

Wait, pheasant, the sharp impatience of his greed.
Wait, before you ease your golden claws, the wrathful step,
The vanishing curse hurled to appease
The loss of your hidden splendor of flesh and feather.

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AN ABANDONED SETTLEMENT

This land sweeps cold and narrow into the rainy sea.
Wind-smoothed dunes rise grey in the drifting light
And the breakers' foam slides angrily up the sand.
Only in jagged streaks of grass spring visits here.

Gulls prow! the mist, crying, hunting the tides.
The sea in predatory stream explores the dunes,
From shell to root, and soon will be the land.
Half sunk and blind the houses are home for mildew,

Centipede and wind. They lie like driven hulks.
Ignorant laughter, ignorant lust and death,
Once lived safe and warm within those walls.
A gaunt forgotten lighthouse rises here,

Leaning toward the shoals it has betrayed.
Suddenly, with slow gigantic lurch, it will crash down,
Its black stones staggering into the waves.
Why does my heart cry out, This is my own place!

THE LAST SWIMMER

Across the darkening cove,
Beneath the blueberry bushes
Caught high in the dunes,

Anthony Wrynn

Stripped, still,
His hands clasped idly on his hip,
Stands the last swimmer.
The water lies at his feet
Without ripple or gleam.

Beyond him, the vacant sky merges its shadow
Softly with the far sea.
The wind blows its sad horn
Over the scrub and sand.

I am fearful of the dark lustful eddies
As he wades slowly out,
Quenching his body in the black water.
I am fearful, fearful, as he swims away
Under the windy stars.

FOREST WOMAN'S EXPLANATION TO A WANDERER

Not shouting you came, back through the forest,
Belted, bold on a horse,
Vanquisher of the cloudy boar,
But silent, the color in your coat
Half sucked away by storm, your step
A feeble whisper in the ferns.
Among what foreign faces did you sit?

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What sharp hands hurried across your flesh
And held your hair
And held your feet?

Were the quail too easily caught in our forest,
Our days too fine, or was our house
So like one more fallen tree
That you who owned a harp and laughed
When the wind went thick with snow
Should have roved the rain
And the weathering of men and the open years?

No, I saw no boldness in your shape. It was not you
Who came wasted through the forest, plundered
Before the broken sunset.
No love, no valiance, lit your eyes.
Your brought no boar. You did not even boast.
So I closed the door.
I was not Christ.

SAINT JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

Naked as anger you came among the rocks and briars,
Like another beast, eating locusts and honey
From storm-bleached hives, putting on nettled skins
In the leaves, passionate, brooding, going to bed on the stones.

Anthony Wrynn

Wildly your words shook from your bearded mouth—
 "Dissolute man,
Gone at the heart, how you try to goad the sweetness of
 summer,
Wring rapture from a weed. Winter comes and your hand
Hurries among the constellations, seeking to twist the stars

In forged solution of your ruin as you fall in secret."
Who heard you there in the dismal rooms of the forest,
Wasting God's light in caves of dross and dust,
Who but the unconquerable rocks and trees?

Scholar you might have been to a later John who forced
 his torrents
Into a page he could not see, regiving paradise with careful
 word,
Who steered God's sun, filled with centuries of grain and
 flowers,
Upon the hungry furrows rotting in frost.

Anthony Wrynn

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REVIEWS

HARRIET MONROE

A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World, by Harriet Monroe. The Macmillan Company.

HARRIET MONROE has written two lives, one properly entitled *A Poet's Life*, one less distinguished but equally interesting, the life of a citizen of Chicago and of the world. Born in that city, December 23, 1860, she grew with its marvelous growth and shared its triumphs and catastrophes. Her father was a lawyer, in contact with the leading men and interests of the city, a generation removed from the pioneers who had migrated from the East. Her older sister married John Wellborn Root, who with Louis Sullivan and Daniel H. Burnham, gave the city its physical distinction. She tells a pleasant story of the life of an American family in the sixties and seventies. The high point of her childhood was the occasion when her father took her to drive, and paced his fast horse against a railroad train, with the applause of the passengers.

Harriet Monroe was always seeking the high points of experience. It is true she admits "I always played wrong in the game of sex, and ran away, emotionally, from boy friends; thus through the flowering years I grew up afraid of love." But on the other hand she confesses: "From earliest childhood I used to tell myself, and God, that I was to be 'great and famous'—I cannot remember the time when to die with-

out leaving some memorable record did not seem to me a calamity too terrible to be borne. Through these years of early youth and even past my thirtieth year this feeling persisted, this sense of consecration which made me think I would prefer art to life." Truly, as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined.

To the bending certain forces in the young city combined. William Vaughn Moody speaks in one of his letters of the complacency of Chicago toward its own productions, the exaggerated appreciation with which it greeted the immature efforts of its youthful aspirants. Harriet Monroe was to some extent the victim of this exaggeration. She was recognized early as a *wunderkind*. She enjoyed the favor of such literary patrons as Eugene Field and Dr. Gunsaulus. Field turned over to her his commission to write the ode for the dedication of the Auditorium, of which she bravely notes: "Today I should like to cancel its publication for two reasons: first, its academic and minor quality as poetry; and second, its anarchy strophe, which implies approval of the mass execution of the seven so-called anarchists, which my more mature judgment denounces as an hysterical public crime and a blot on the city's honor." By Eugene Field's mediation, she was introduced to the literary circles of New York, ruled by Edmund Clarence Stedman and Richard Watson Gilder, and even of London. But her first real achievement was owing to her own indomitable pluck. This was her authorship of the Columbian Ode for the dedication of the buildings of the Columbian Exposition. In seeking this honor she was

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actuated not only by personal ambition but by her loyalty to the art which she made her own. She was determined that among the fine arts—architecture, sculpture, painting—so brilliantly exposed, poetry should not be unrepresented. And having decided that there must be a Columbian ode, and that she would write it, she went boldly to members of the Committee on Ceremonies and obtained the commission. But there was opposition to accepting the ode when it was written, because of its length and a brief tribute to John Wellborn Root, who had died in the midst of his intense labor which had borne fruit in the architectural splendor of the Exposition. Harriet Monroe carried her case to the highest authority, the Council of Administration, and won it. Another high point in her career was the dedication ceremony when her ode was recited by Mrs. Le Moyne in the presence of the great gathering in the Court of Honor, and she was handed a laurel wreath by Vice President Morton on behalf of the "ladies of Chicago." A significant aftermath was her successful suit against *The New York World* for stealing a copy of the poem and publishing it in advance of the dedication. Here again she was defending not only her own right but the dignity of the art whose sponsor in America she was to become.

Beneath Harriet Monroe's shy and retiring appearance and manner there was boldness and determination. She knew what she wanted, and how to get it. She had an endless curiosity about people which she satisfied. As a girl she conceived an admiration for Robert Louis Stevenson, and wrote to tell

Harriet Monroe

him of it. The subsequent correspondence makes an interesting chapter in her autobiography, culminating in her account of a meeting in New York which proved a disillusionment. Other figures of the age furnish matter for comment, vivid and incisive. She had a love of travel, and with very limited resources she made many journeys, visiting every continent except Africa. She was interested in all the arts—painting, sculpture, architecture. And she could turn from the galleries of Paris or Florence, and the palaces of Peking, to take even more intense delight in camping in the Sierras or on the edge of the Grand Canyon. This last provided her with another peak of high experience. She never wrote better poetry than her prose description of her discovery of this appalling work of nature's art.

Harriet Monroe's autobiography falls into two parts—before the establishment of POETRY, and after. Her loyalty to the art which she had elected to follow was the inspiration of the magazine; and her courage, energy, and decision were the qualities which carried it to success. She saw the other fine arts receiving attention and support from the growing culture of America.

Why was poetry left out of it?—poetry, perhaps the finest of the fine arts, certainly the shyest and most elusive?—poetry, which must have listeners, which cannot sing into a void? Why was there nothing done for poets, the most unappreciated and ill-paid artists in the world? One reason, manifestly, was that a poem cannot be exhibited and bought and possessed by some private or public collector in the manner of a painting or a statue. . . . But the chief reason, it seemed to me, was that poetry had no one to speak for it, no group

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of powerful citizens to take a special interest in it, to plead its cause with a planned and efficient program of propaganda.

She had in her own experience an example of the uncertain fate of poems at the casual hands of magazine editors. Her lyric "I love my life" was submitted to almost every reputable magazine, only to accumulate a mass of rejection slips. After its publication in POETRY it has found a place in nearly every anthology.

The group of Chicago people, headed by Hobart Chatfield-Taylor, who furnished the annual contributions for POETRY is given generous recognition in Miss Monroe's book, and also the assistants who so ably seconded her efforts—Alice Corbin Henderson, Eunice Tietjens, Helen Hoyt, George Dillon, Jessica Nelson North, Marion Strobel, Morton Dauwen Zabel. She is justly proud of the distinction of the magazine in giving first general recognition to the poetry of Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence and others. She contributes much to the somewhat obscure literary history of the period. The controversy over the origin of imagism would seem to be settled by the letter of Ezra Pound. "The name first appears in my introduction to T. E. Hulme at the end of *Ripostes*, and the whole affair was started, not very seriously, chiefly to get H. D.'s five poems a hearing. It began certainly in Church Walk with H. D., Richard Aldington and myself." Fletcher, Lawrence, Storer and Amy Lowell came in as rank outsiders. "The others climbed onto Amy."

From the outset POETRY swung to the left. Its objective

Harriet Monroe

was to enlarge the bounds of poetry, to give invention and originality a voice which was denied them by the conventional magazines. Harriet Monroe herself was a radical in every sense. When the first exhibition of cubist and post impressionist paintings was brought to Chicago in 1913 she wrote for the Chicago *Tribune* of which she was the art critic:

American art, under conservative management, is getting too pallid, moveless, photographic. Better the wildest extravagances of the cubists than the lifeless works of certain artists who ridicule them. Better the most remote and mysterious symbolism than a camera-like fidelity to appearances. We are in an anaemic condition which requires strong medicine, and it will do us good to take it without kicks and wry faces. . . . Revolt is rarely sweetly reasonable; it goes usually to extremes, even absurdities. But when revolutionary feeling pervades a whole society or its expression in the arts, when the world seems moved by strange motives, and disturbing ideals, then the wise statesman, the true philosopher, is in no haste to condemn his age. On the contrary, he watches in all humility the most extreme manifestations of the new spirit, eager to discover the deeper meaning in them.

In 1932 she was seen at a reception to Mr. W. Z. Foster, Communist candidate for President.

When Harriet Monroe took her resolution to become a liaison officer between the poets and the public she achieved an importance to American and English literature which can scarcely be overestimated. The tributes of gratitude and affection of which she received so many were a deserved recognition of her service. Particularly should Chicago cherish her memory as that of one of the notable women who have done so much to redeem its reputation. The city in which one judge forbade Coquelin and Mansfield to play

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Cyrano de Bergerac on the ground that Rostand had stolen the plot from the production of a local real estate dealer, and another judge pronounced Bacon to be the author of Shakespeare's dramas has cause indeed to thank the gods who gave it Harriet Monroe and POETRY.

Robert Morss Lovett

TWO METHODS

Poems, by Rex Warner. Alfred A. Knopf.

If I have read Mr. Warner's poems at all correctly, I should say before anything else that his intentions are highly admirable. Unfortunately, Rex Warner did not participate in the now-famous question-and-answer stunt conducted a few years ago by *New Verse*, so that the critic cannot refer to the author's own words either for the purpose of disagreement and incrimination, or merely in order to make him choke on his own statement.

The actual performance displayed in this first book is very uneven, a mixture of sensuous observations and dialectics which has not fused into a unity. The reader is continually being brought face to face with acute and accurate images of the natural world, and when politics are introduced, and often when abstractions of any kind appear, a poem goes to pieces. More specifically; the poem *Love* attempts in a purely direct manner to create this fusion, and is half-successful; it is when Warner begins to draw to his conclusion and his

Two Methods

generality takes precedence over the details that the words fail to solidify the reader's experience.

Only love is any good
or else some drug such as devotion to duty;
but love is best
for sun splitting cloud
wind clearing the blue
the birds rolling gay in riot of high air
but most of all for men.
For among shouts or in silence love
beneath raging banners or alone with one or two
can be felt running
like fire below moss
or ordinary established roots
of the numb response, the ceremonial face,
still the stream of fire.

By setting this passage, which seems to me to illustrate the kind of failure which mars much of Warner's work, against a passage from the poem called *Nile Fishermen*, I trust that my meaning will become clear.

Naked men, fishing in Nile without a license,
kneedeep in it, pulling gaunt at stretched ropes.
Round the next bend is the police boat and the officials
ready to make an arrest on the yellow sand.

The splendid bodies are stark to the swimming sand,
taut to the ruffled water, the flickering palms,
yet swelling and quivering as they tug at the trembling ropes.
Their faces are bent along the arms and still.

The first passage starts from a large concept, and uses its images as incidentals and illustrations; in the second passage,

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the two single images (the fishermen and the police) are opposed to each other, and treated directly as the activating center (in the complete poem) out of which an event takes shape. Both methods have their advantages, of course, and it would be foolish to infer that because Warner is not as successful in the first kind of writing as he is in the second, he should "profit by his failures and stick to one trade."

But at present, Warner is at his best when he lets his particularized event make its own meaning. The desire to write poetry with a clarity that makes notes of interpretation unnecessary is neither new nor unusual, but it is a desire that can become abnormal and defeat its own ends. Warner occasionally over-simplifies and underestimates not only his readers but himself in addition. It is not, therefore, wholly surprising that in poems like *Chough*, *Curlew at Sunset*, *Egyptian Kites*, *Mallard*, *Fellaheen*, and *Nile Fishermen*, poems which are written out of an isolated experience, and which are realized in clean and fresh detail, the reader finds Warner making his strongest bid for attention.

The obviously political poems seem to suffer from too-great expansion, and from the seemingly vague feeling which dictated them. There are exceptions to this, and the first section of *Chorus*, if it is read without a shake of the head at the ghosts that stalk the lines, proves genuinely moving; the same is true of *Unsettled Weather* and *Storm and War*. I do not mean that I question the impulse which motivated these political poems, but I feel that the poems themselves are not whole:

Two Methods

Now you can join 'us, now all together sing All Power,
not to-morrow but now in this hour, All Power
to Lovers of Life, to Workers, to the Hammer, the
Sickle, the Blood.
Come then companions. This is the spring of blood,
heart's heyday, movement of masses, beginning of good.

Philip O'Connor has called these revolutionary poems "a trifle 'decent'," and I think that he has hit the nail on the head. Warner recognizes the horror of war, the uselessness of so much present-day brutality, but in his poems he makes revolution too much of a picnic.

I have said nothing of the influences which are apparent in Warner's work, which will be noticed by any reader, nor have I tried to 'place' him in relation to the usual group of English poets. Warner has much to straighten out in his writing; in the meantime, he repays careful reading, both for his subtle ear and his often striking abilities in the field of pure description.

Samuel French Morse

"PLENTY OF NEWS"

Letters from Iceland, by W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice.
Random House.

One of the English reviewers has declared that Auden and MacNeice were too busy showing themselves off to advantage to notice Iceland, that the few impressions of it they have set down are either superficial or false, and that their

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general attitude is, in a word, Public School. To be called Public School is of course to be branded as beneath consideration. I am not sure I understand all the implications of this most complex and British insult, but I am convinced that as an appraisal of *Letters from Iceland* it is itself beneath consideration. It may be true that the authors have given us an inaccurate account of the country and its inhabitants. Not having been there, I cannot say. It is true that they have told us more about themselves than about Iceland. But that was precisely what they set out to do. Auden states MacNeice's as well as his own aims in the opening section of his *Letter to Lord Byron*:

I want a form that's large enough to swim in,
And talk on any subject that I choose,
From natural scenery to men and women,
Myself, the arts, the European news.

Elsewhere he says that the letters "will have very little to do with Iceland, but will be rather a description of an effect of traveling in distant places, which is to make one reflect on one's past and one's culture from the outside." Whether or not you approve of the authors' aims, it must be admitted that they have realized them very successfully. If, like the present writer, you do approve, you will find this one of the wittiest, most entertaining books of recent years.

To be entertaining and at the same time to treat of the major issues of the day is no easy task, especially for the modern poet. And to combine these major issues with the smaller, more personal concerns of ordinary existence is even

"Plenty of News"

more difficult. Auden has been able to do both. In this new book, as in his verse and the plays written in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood, he has on occasion been willing to seem obvious, didactic or prosaic in order to make his work "useful"—useful, in the sense that it reflects, defines and illuminates the most pertinent and urgent problems of our time. To this end he has forced poetry to expand its range of interests, to draw upon such hitherto largely untouched fields as economics, biology, and psychoanalysis. MacNeice has been working toward much the same end. He, too, has attempted to combine the common-places of day-to-day living with the larger world-perspectives of our age. It is therefore not surprising that these letters should contain what Auden once said might reasonably be demanded of any piece of creative writing: "plenty of news."

The "news" in this book ranges from personal gossip and literary chit-chat to unemployment, malnutrition, and the war in Spain. Auden, as might be expected, has provided the bulk of it. His fairly lengthy *Letter to Lord Byron* is at once a brilliant *tour de force* and an incisive commentary on the contemporary scene. Written in a seven-line stanza closely approximating the *ottava rima* of Byron's *Don Juan*, it contains some of Auden's best satirical verse—and Auden's satire at its best is as good as any we have today. MacNeice is represented by an amusing but over-long parody, *Hetty to Nancy*, by two poems, *Epilogue* and *Iceland*, (the latter very interesting technically) and by what I consider his strongest, best sustained work to date, *Eclogue from Iceland*. The

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theme of the *Eclogue* is similar to that of Auden's profound and beautiful *Journey to Iceland* (first printed in *Poetry*) but MacNeice's approach and treatment are altogether his own. In collaboration the two poets are less successful. The *Last Will and Testament*, in which they both had a hand, is for the most part a hodge-podge of private allusions and pointless innuendoes that will be meaningless to all except the initiate.

Such lapses, however, are unimportant beside the book's many virtues. *Letters from Iceland*, in addition to being good fun, is an impressive and valuable work because it helps make us more aware and more intelligently aware, not of Iceland, but of "the world, and the present, and the lie." In imparting this awareness the authors' purpose, as their closing lines testify, has been to communicate to each of us a fuller understanding of his own responsibilities:

And to the good who know how wide the gulf, how deep
Between Ideal and Real, who being good have felt
The final temptation to withdraw, sit down and weep,

We pray the power to take upon themselves the guilt
Of human action, though still as ready to confess
The imperfection of what can and must be built,
The wish and power to act, forgive, and bless.

T. C. Wilson

Facing the Guns

FACING THE GUNS

And Spain Sings: Fifty Loyalist Ballads, adapted by American poets, edited by M. J. Benardete and Rolfe Humphries. The Vanguard Press.

To read the average collection of World War poems, English or American, is a melancholy experience. Today such anthologies fill us with a sense of revulsion, and even at the time they must have been incredibly dreary. Often the sentiments were those of arm-chair heroes, the hack poetasters eager to serve the interests of the British foreign office. On one page the theme would be stand-up-and-play-the-game-for-dear-old-England and on the next kill-the-dirty-Boche. The real poems of the war—the work of Englishmen like Sassoon, Rosenberg, Sorley and Owen, the isolated examples from Americans like Cummings, the poets who put down the horror and the pity—rarely were included.

And Spain Sings, let us hasten to say, offers few parallels with such volumes. The poets of the originals and the translators are honest writers. There are no false heroics, no puerile self-glorification in these pages. Even when the poems have been written with fury and contempt, the emotions come from immediate experience and are accompanied by a fierce and often noble dignity. This is what the poets of Spain as a part of the people of Spain have written while facing the Fascist guns.

This volume had its beginning, as M. J. Benardete points out in one of the admirable forewords, when the Spanish

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poets, at the start of the rebellion, "revived the oldest tradition in Spanish poetry: the medieval *romance* or ballad." All of these ballads were first printed in *El Mono Azul*, the weekly newspaper of anti-Fascist intellectuals, which was founded August 27, 1936. For Spanish poetry, it was a time both good and evil: that month Federico Garcia Lorca, regarded by many as the finest young poet in any language, was murdered by the Fascists at Granada.

The methods by which the ballads were translated provide a valuable example of collective action by writers. In most instances the prose translations of editor Benardete were turned into English metrical forms; in some cases, however, French versions from the magazine *Commune* were the basis for composition. Though all writers had the originals, as Rolfe Humphries points out, "In the strict sense of the word most of these poems can not be called hard and fast translations; they are free versions, adaptations, paraphrase." The result is a collection in vigorous and popular language, remarkably consistent in tone, considering the number and variety of poems and translators. Poets adapt poems with effectiveness and prove that writers can co-operate internationally on a specific task.

About one third of the book is the work of Rolfe Humphries, who has turned the assonantal patterns of the originals into fairly strict stanza forms, for the most part. One of the best but least recognized of contemporary poets, Humphries has a considerable knowledge of languages, especially the classics, and a good ear for racy speech. Among

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his most memorable short translations are *Who Went By Here?* by Antonio Aparicio, with its effective incremental repetition; *Against the Cold in the Sierras* by José Herrera Petere; and the two ribald pieces on Mola and Queipo de Llano. But it is the long poems like Manuel Altolaguirre's *The Tower of El Carpio*, Rafael Alberti's *The Last Duke of Alba*, and Rosa Chacel's *Alarm!* that best show Humphries' skill. Here is the opening stanza of Alberti's poem:

You tower-haunting martins,
You swallows and gray doves
Are turned to coward ravens
Or savage vulture-droves;
Machine guns in each cranny,
Rifles in every niche,
Pour on the village houses
The blessings of the rich.

Humphries' fellow contributors, both familiar and little known, have ample chance to show their powers. Of W. C. Williams' three pieces, *Wind of the Village* by Miguel Hernandez is most interesting. Edna St. Vincent Millay puts the stamp of her style on Emilio Prados' *The Arrival*. Other poets are less personal but equally moving. Willard Maas, Stanley Kunitz, George Dillon and Shaemas O'Sheel are among those who do excellent work. There are laments for fallen friends, battle incidents, praise for the brave and jeers for the despised. Rarely are the poems forced or strident, as is the case in the translation of Vicente Aleixandre's *The Man Who Was Shot*.

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That this volume, the work of many hands, should be so good may seem to some a fortunate accident. What has lifted even minor talents above themselves is a spirit of a great people who embody the heroic virtues of plain people everywhere struggling for a decent life. Neither these poems nor the force that has animated them will be lost on the world.

Theodore Roethke

ANOTHER EXILE

Heinrich Heine: Paradox and Poet (The Life and The Poems), 2 vols., by Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace.

In these two volumes Louis Untermeyer has provided a new biography of Heine and a translation of more than five hundred of his poems, many of which appeared in an earlier (1917) volume of Mr. Untermeyer's and many of which are here translated for the first time. A sentence on the dust wrapper, somewhat ambiguous in its form and questionable in its taste, assures us that "all the erotic and 'censored' verses appear as Heine originally wrote them." It is true that all verses of this quality which appear at all are translated without expurgation; but it does not seem necessary to celebrate Mr. Untermeyer's fidelity to the text of Heine in a fashion which suggests that the seeker for erotica will find a rich field in this volume. In like manner the publishers hail the "frankness" of Mr. Untermeyer in the biography, because he describes the long illness of Heine as the slow

Another Exile

ravaging of syphilis. Such recommendations of these volumes belie the nature of both the translations and the biography, for Untermeyer is never militantly frank nor insistently revelatory.

The biography of Heine is consciously designed as a setting for the poems; and the poems are so arranged that they may be read as a poetically logical autobiography of the poet. The close relationship between the events in Heine's life, the moods occasioned by these events, and the resultant poetic expression is made clear. The poems are "dated," and the long list of Heine's loves—the Dianes, the Clarissas, the Yolandas and the Emmas—are identified. Those seeking critical enlightenment and not feeling that such settings for the poems are necessary or relevant will find the biography unrewarding, for too little criticism of any other sort is offered. In Untermeyer's scheme, the biography not only "accounts for" the poems, but its data also determine the nature of many of his translations. Inasmuch as Untermeyer feels that *Du bist wie eine Blume*, for example, is not an apostrophe to an innamorata but a poem inspired by the innocent, child-like beauty of Heine's cousin, Therese Heine, he translates the first stanza:

Child, you are like a flower,
So sweet and pure and fair;
I look at you, and sadness
Touches me with a prayer.

Untermeyer will not allow that *Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten* be placed as a detached legend among the ballads

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of Heine. "The Loreley, besides being a siren, is a symbol; she is Amalie"—Amalie Heine, the woman who stood in the poet's mind for both delight and destruction. Untermeyer reads the following quatrain from one of the lyrics of *Die Heimkehr* against the background of Heine's ironic "homecoming" to Hamburg and an indifferent Amalie:

Nur einmal mocht ich dich sehen,
Und sinken vor dir aufs Knie;
Und sterbend zu dir sprechen:
"Madam, ich liebe sie!"

And he provides the following translation:

Oh, once, only once, might I see thee,
Ere I break these fetters in shards,
And kneel to thee, dying, and murmur:
"Madam, my best regards."

Other translators, with less knowledge of German and less knowledge of the occasion of the poem, have translated the last line variously: "Madam, I love but you"; "Lady, I love but thee"; and "Lady mine, I love you!", thus concealing Heine's "sudden twist of purpose". Years after this "homecoming" when Heine, racked by headaches and creeping paralysis, lay sick in Paris, he wrote *Ich mache die kleinen Lieder*. Untermeyer would have us see the poet reverting to his early frustrations, to the remembered bitterness of his affair with Amalie. And here again, with that same sudden twist of purpose, we find, following the lyric tenderness of the poem's opening, the *double entendre* of the closing quatrain:

Another Exile

And yet—though maybe wrong stirs
This body that burns and longs—
I'd rather have made your youngsters
Than any and all of my songs.

It is the retention of such values as these in the poetry of Heine that seems to me to distinguish the translations of Mr. Untermeyer. Whether or not the facts of Heine's biography will always seem to justify the interpretations which Untermeyer sets forth in his translations is a matter which may be opened to debate. But he has served warning on all translators that they must move cautiously in translating single poems or groups of poems without a familiarity with the corpus of a poet's work and without a knowledge of the pertinent biographical information.

When we consider Mr. Untermeyer's life of Heine as a contribution to the art of biography, however, his work seems to me to lack peculiar distinction. Mr. Osbert Burdett, writing on *Experiment in Biography*, speaks of those "vital contradictions necessary to a lively portrait"; but he does not reckon with the biographer's plight when he is confronted with a superabundance of "vital contradictions". If such contradictions, as Mr. Burdett contends, be the salt of character, what does the biographer do when confronted with an excess of salt? Mr. Untermeyer finds—perhaps inevitably—that Heine's life, if it is to be described faithfully, must be continually described as a paradox. Certainly he finds that Heine himself constantly supplied in his letters, his conversations, his prose and his poetry the materials for a self-por-

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trait of the artist as paradox. But nevertheless the reader becomes wearied by the reiteration of incongruous appellations, antithetical phrases, and warring adjectives. Heine's father, we are told at the outset of the biography, possessed a "self-assurance coupled with a demand that others help him out of difficulties"—a characteristic inherited by his son. Heine, while learning to write in the Romantic tradition, was strengthening himself as the destroyer of German Romanticism. Heine was both romanticist and realist; both tender and cruel; both naive and deceptive; both a believer and a skeptic. Heine, as the most sensitive user of German speech, longed to write poetry in pure Arabic. Heine was Hebraic when contending most strongly that he was an Hellene. Heine's obvious love of Germany was "intensified by satiric onslaughts on all that the average German considered sacrosanct". The flavor of Heine's verse was bitter-sweet, the "*süss-sauer* pungency which is as characteristic of the Jewish temperament as it is of the German-Jewish cuisine". Heine complained of not being regarded with sufficient seriousness, and of being taken too seriously. Heine, the wittiest man in Europe, was married to the stupidest child. Heine fought that the Old Order might be judged and condemned, while believing with Whitman that "man is about the same, whether with despotism or with freedom". Heine had the head of Christ with the smile of Mephistopheles. These instances of the paradoxical—and dozens of others throughout the book—provide Untermeyer with an embarrassment of riches. The result is a series of statements of the puzzling

from which never emerges the picture of a personality. Heine remains enigmatic; he never becomes human. We have the life, not of a man, but of a figure of speech.

Mr. Untermeyer cannot—and perhaps should not—resist the temptation to draw the parallel between Heine's Germany from which he had to flee as an expatriate and Hitler's Germany from which his poetry has been banned. *Die Lorelei*, he tells us, "still stands in the Nazi songbooks. F. Silcher, who gave it a tune in 1859, is credited with being the composer; the words are by 'Author Unknown'".

William M. Sale, Jr.

NEWS NOTES

We are glad to report that the Shelley Memorial Award for the current year has been made to Lincoln Fitzell of Berkeley, California. Our readers will remember Mr. Fitzell's interesting poems in this magazine. His work has also appeared in *The New Republic*, *The American Caravan*, and other periodicals. Born in San Francisco and educated at the University of California, Mr. Fitzell lived for a time in Europe and has done graduate work at Harvard. The Shelley Memorial Award carries with it a prize of eight hundred dollars.

An enjoyable broadcast in honor of POETRY's twenty-fifth anniversary was conducted by A. M. Sullivan over the Mutual network on February 13th. Mr. Sullivan opened his program with the following tribute: "Publishing has always been a hazardous business, but the editing and printing of a journal devoted to poetry is probably the most perilous and discouraging adventure with printer's ink. After twenty-five years, POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse* is still functioning and maintaining an uninterrupted monthly schedule. Its founder, Harriet Monroe, did not quite live to see the twenty-fifth anniversary of the magazine, but her spirit carries it along." The feature of the

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occasion was a speech by Edgar Lee Masters, who told of POETRY's early struggles and triumphs, and recalled Lindsay's observation "that the movement was Western and that England and the East tried to capture it." Some of the famous poems first published in the magazine were read with great effectiveness by Norman Corwin. Mr. Corwin's performance should serve as an example to those who wish to read verse, whether on the platform or over the radio.

A Federal Arts Committee has been organized, with offices at the Murray Hill Hotel, New York, to sponsor the Coffee-Pepper Bill for the establishment of a Federal Bureau of Fine Arts. Lawrence Tibbett is national chairman, Burgess Meredith heads the executive committee, and the work of the participating groups is in charge of the following. Ruth St. Denis for the dance and allied arts, Max Weber for the graphic and plastic arts, Donald Ogden Stewart for literature, Leopold Stokowski for music, and Lillian Gish for the theatre. Mr. Meredith writes: "There is a very good chance to effect the passage of this bill, which is of momentous importance to the whole cultural future of the country. The Federal Arts Committee has been formed to work unremittingly until the Bureau of Fine Arts is a reality."

Conrad Aiken, whose present address is Jeake's House, Rye, Sussex, England, announces that he and his artist wife, Mary Hoover Aiken, are prepared to instruct not more than six resident students in painting, drawing, fiction, and poetry. The fortunate students must be between the ages of nineteen and thirty. Rye is a finely preserved old town, and Jeake's House contains an art gallery and a library. Mr. Aiken will supply particulars on request.

Though Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, is still visiting "white" Spain as the guest of General Franco, American Culture is not without its defenders at home. From Rye, New York, comes the first issue of *The Examiner*, a new quarterly of fascist propaganda edited by Geoffrey Stone, in which a period of nationalist regimentation and the ejection of "those elements that frustrate a congruous American civilization" are prescribed as necessary for our country's artistic and spiritual health. "It all sounds faintly bloodthirsty, I know," admits one of the contributors. The tone of *The Examiner* is indeed bloodthirsty, but faint.

A heartier and more promising sign for the welfare of our national culture is provided by the new issue of *Direction*, subtitled "American Stuff," a special number devoted to the work of creative writers employed on the Federal Writers' Project. Edited by Harold Rosen-

berg and containing 128 pages of stories, poems, and art reproductions, this issue is in effect a finely printed book-length anthology of some of the most gifted young writers in the country. The work presented has unmistakable vitality, and though written "off time" is a splendid argument for the sponsorship of creative writing by the Government. Anyone in doubt as to the value and necessity of such sponsorship should read carefully the opening paragraph of Mr. Rosenberg's editorial: "Certain aspects of the art of writing—movie and radio scripts, Broadway plays, best sellers, stories and articles for popular magazines—have in recent years become associated with big business and the earnings of big business. This fact has created the impression that, in contrast with painting and music, literature can maintain itself without any other support than the laws of the market. Yet an essential portion of American letters during the past 30 years brought little or no financial return to its producers and had to be written and published on a subsidized basis outside the sphere of commercial publication." *Direction* is published at 112 East 19th Street, New York.

Five contests of interest to poets require notice this month:

May 1st is the closing date for the annual competition in the Yale Series of Younger Poets. This series, edited by Stephen Vincent Benét, is open to American poets under thirty who have not previously published a volume of verse. Manuscripts of 48 to 64 pages are acceptable and should be addressed to the Editor, Yale Series of Younger Poets, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.

The Forum offers one thousand dollars in nine prizes ranging from \$40 to \$300 for the best poems "challenging the American people to be alert to their liberties." Poems will be classified in three groups: A—General Public; B—College Undergraduates; C—Secondary School Students. Each manuscript must be clearly marked with its group letter and addressed to the Poetry Contest Editor, *The Forum*, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York. This contest had its inception in a meeting of Lawrence Tibbett, Jascha Heifetz, Padraic Colum, and Henry Goddard Leach, to launch a campaign for a new national anthem. Mr. Colum believes that it is "a job for professionals," while Dr. Leach is hopeful that "farmers, housewives, preachers, and clerks may be well able to turn out the verses we need." Both amateurs and "professionals" will be admitted to the *Forum* contest, which closes June 30th.

Another offer of one thousand dollars is made by the League of American Writers for poetry and prose by undergraduates enrolled

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in American or Canadian universities, colleges, or secondary schools during the current academic year. The contest closes July 4th, prizes range from \$50 to \$500, and the jury will consist of Elliot Paul, Donald Ogden Stewart, Jean Starr Untermeyer, K. V. Kaltenborn, Robert Morss Lovett, and Clifford Odets. Students living east of the Mississippi may obtain full particulars from Rolfe Humphries, League of American Writers, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York; those west of the Mississippi from Ellen Kinkadee, 3354 Clay Street, San Francisco.

A prize of \$300 is offered by Stanford University for an original play in verse. The contest closes June 1st, and there are no restrictions as to length, theme, or verse form. Contestants are asked to enclose a fee of one dollar with each manuscript, to cover the costs of mailing between judges. Requests for information should be addressed to Dr. Margery Bailey, Contest Proctor, Stanford University, California.

The Cummington School, Cummington, Mass., announces a competitive scholarship for summer study in writing, to provide all tuition and living expenses, and offered only for those who cannot finance their study without full aid. Candidates must have completed secondary school; the competition will take place in May, and all applications are to be filed before May 1st. Those interested should write to the Registrar for instructions.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

EDGAR LEE MASTERS is too famous to need an introduction. His recent book-length narrative poem, *The New World*, was reviewed in our January issue by Harold Rosenberg, who called it "proximate and significant . . . history-writing with idealism and a hot argument."

ANTHONY WRYYN is a resident of Brooklyn. His infrequent poems, contributed chiefly to *POETRY* and *The Dial*, are prized by collectors.

MICHAEL ROBERTS, of England, was editor of *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* and is the author of *Poems*, *The Critique of Poetry*, and *The Modern Mind*, recently published by Macmillan.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH was born in Wisconsin in 1906, graduated from Haverford College, and is now living in London. He is the author of a book of poems, *The Assassins*, and of two widely discussed novels, *The Asiatics* and *The Seven Who Fleed*. A new book of his poems will be published in May by Chatto and Windus.

Notes on Contributors

JEAN STARR UNTERMAYER, one of the best known American women poets, is the author of several books of poems, including *Steep Ascent* and *Winged Child*. Mrs. Untermeyer tells us that *Kristin's Song* was written after reading *Kristin Lavrandsdatter*, "a reading which was an identification."

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, born in Haverhill, Mass., and educated at Brown University, is the author of a highly praised book of poems, *Biography for Traman*. He now lives in Providence, R. I.

ANNE YOUNG, of Brooklyn, is a teacher of mathematics. *The Willow Tree* is the first poem she has sent us since 1935.

RICHARD LEON SPAIN, born in Mangum, Oklahoma, in 1916, now lives on a farm on the Ozark Plateau near Rogers, Arkansas. He has contributed poems to a number of magazines, including POETRY.

EDWIN MORGAN, also known to our readers, lives in New York City.

KATHLEEN SUTTON, of Anniston, Alabama, was introduced last November.

HENRY RAGO is a young Chicago poet, doing graduate work at Notre Dame.

The following make their first appearance:

DOROTHY PAUL, born in New Orleans and educated at Tulane, is now resident in the Philippines, where her husband is director of a medical research foundation.

TERENCE HEYWOOD lives in Arundel, Sussex, England.

ELIZABETH F. GRIFFIN was born at Peak's Island, Maine, graduated from Mt. Holyoke College, and now lives in Livermore Falls, Maine. Her verse has appeared in several magazines and anthologies.

All but one of this month's reviewers have contributed previously to POETRY.

ROBERT MORSS IOVETT, who divides his time between New York and the midwest, is an editor of *The New Republic* and a member of the English faculty of the University of Chicago. SAMUEL FRENCH MORSE, of Danvers, Mass., is doing graduate work at Harvard. T. C. WILSON is a frequent contributor of criticism to American and English periodicals. THEODORE ROETHKE, whose poetry is familiar to our readers, was educated at the University of Michigan and at Harvard, and now teaches at State College, Pennsylvania. WILLIAM M. SALE, JR., is on the English faculty of Cornell University.

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THE CRITERION

A Quarterly Review

EDITED BY T. S. ELIOT

January 1938



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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LII NO. II

MAY 1938

NOTES FOR A FUTURE BALLET

I

IF EVER to dance again, or ever to dance:
Then everyone everywhere;
Then street, walk, block and square,
Dancing.
Mardi gras or nothing; horns
For everyone, or nothing,
If ever to sing.

—This is manifestly silly, outrageously impulsive. It fails to take into account the True Facts. Even if she would, could lame old Mrs. O'Riordan dance? Even if she can, will proud Maisie dance? No. No. Peter who jingles his cup has no eyes to dance with. That nameless one who

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pushes his body on wheels—well? 'Mrs. Van 'Tassel Gossoon, the rich bitch: will she descend from the wave of her limousine for a bacchanal? With Patrick the cop, I suppose? Maimie the blonde has done dancing enough in her bed. That nice Mr. Brown on the corner: what evening beholds him but pushing slowly one foot from the other after the day's work, home to his wife and the kids: they have food enough to keep awake but not ever to dance. There isn't a pair in the block has clothes for a party. If the kids dance in their rags, then they don't know better. Turn on the radio.

(Somewhere people—in a hotel, I bet—dance to that music: we get the overflow, piped out. No fancy clothes, no champagne, no chromium to sit at, no swell girls to grab onto, no slick floor, no shine of shirts and shoes.)

We overheard the music. Thank you.

Half the folks in the block don't care if they don't dance. They sit and rock to the radio swing, and God's in the mike, all's well, and the music is free. Anyway these are war times.

All times are war times

—All times?—

and anyway, how do you dance.

Winfield Townley Scott

2

These died by air:
They took a plane west and cracked up in the Sierras and
were never found in the snow.
These went down in the Pacific in search of the islands and
were never found in the sea.
One man made it: kept west and soon
Came humming out of the eastern sky.
He'd been around.

3

I remember La Argentina, the beautiful dancer
Who died suddenly: her heart grown big felled her.
She was a beautiful dancer, a dark dancer.
She would not be there: stage, a widening silence.
Then in the hidden wings the slow stir, the whispered
Chuckle, the sly castanets beginning beginning.
Yes? Not yet, no. Yes. The mischievous clock
Ticked again: tried: rustled: stammered, ran wild,
And she swept there upon the incredible air
With the great skirt of her dancing spinning the light,
And theatre whirling under the Spanish music
Of her swift dancing. Spill, cascade, fountain,
Flicking clutter of flowers, her fingers' laughter.

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4

Let the crocus air invoke spring.
Gardens are not impossible.
Sun steams on the roofs where
Snow has hung.

The new straw color of sun,
The sky's thawed blue.
Simple is grass and simple
The dandelion.

I believe in the circling wall,
I believe in the orchard lawn
For you and me and the child,
Though nothing is here at all.

5

If ever to dance, then everyone, everywhere.
The music unheard, not undreamed;
Teach me, my love.
You are not frail: the line of your strident thighs
Is full and wise.

Winfield Townley Scott

To dance

The unfolding of your palms toward me,
The lifting of your face, and your flung hair;
To dance the turn of your shoulders,
The mouth and its speaking,
Your lips on my silence.
Your breasts have broken the night,
Your knees tread up the light,
Arms raise the light.

To dance

Praise of the naked—
Despite the cancer of the sun.

Winfield Townley Scott

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THREE POEMS

VALLEY

Where brooks cleave the green dells with silver,
Between the sunlit heights,
The badger toils from break of day
Till glow-worms trim their lights.
 The rabbit plays in sunny place
 And with her forefeet grooms her face.

There the sage bee finds the flower,
And the shy deer its mate;
There undisturbed the minnow
Travels its gold estate;
 The squirrel sits beneath his tail,
 The flute-bird tries her silver scale.

PRAIRIE

I reap the lights of Paris
On the plain:
Her pearl-decked boulevards
Walk through the rain.

Tom Boggs

I hear the hum of London
Through the night —
Above the sheaves of wheat
Stand towers of light.

For artifice of warmth
I hail the south—
Though here the freezing rain
Succeeds the drouth.

The dust may blot the summer,
The snow make winter blind:
Wind blow out every acre,
But not the inch of mind.

FOR A NEW BOY

Welcome, welcome, welcome, sir,
Welcome, sir, to life and all.
My pity you must dwell some, sir,
On this wild terrestrial ball.
But maybe you'll be happy here,
One of those whose brain's a blur;
Carelessly rich or a-whoop in a ditch!
Welcome, welcome, welcome, sir.

Tom Boggs

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TWO . POEMS

THE FLIGHT

"Once they get the idea, you can't kill it with bullets."

(From Ben Leider's last letter, written February 18, 1937, the day before he was killed in aerial combat defending Madrid)

On the ground
The plane is wheeled into the wind and rests
Darkly and still.
From fire-cloven crests
The mountains shake with shells
And the sharp sound
Of diving wings,
Through which the wind sings.

Under the sky
A man moves quickly to his waiting plane;
Over a span of seas he came to die
That there be living in the day
In Spain.

But in the earth there is a quickening,
While through the air,
The blinding revelation of a flare
Bursts on the dark.

Boris Todrin

Now in the plane he is' the transient spark
Of never-ending fires.
From the ground
The squadron leans upon the dark.
The shadows push the earth away and rise—
There are other wings upon the skies.

The hawk, the eagle lose the ruined sky:
There is a fallen bird in fire and wastes
That yet will fly
And cannot die.

Over the harrowed fields and cropless night
The planes are deep in darkness.
Down below
A sudden light burns with its living breath—
The spreading flare
Goes like a ghost upon its earthward glare.

The squadron leaves
The wakened fires of the shell-ploughed west
And turns upon the trenches;
But the nest
Sends its avenging wings upon the air.

Over the cracked fields and stone-filled night,
The planes fight.

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And he who crossed the seas to a torn land,
Becomes its sand.

Now alien wings spread from the night's corners
And stab the squadron to a flaming rout,
Gashing the wind with fire.
And darkness grows in deeper than before
When flame dies out.

And back upon its own resisting earth,
The squadron bullet-cut and shell-shaken
Comes from the blade of dawn upon its sleep.
But deep
Under wingful skies
The flyer lies.

And who will name the hand or find the steel,
And who will come upon his body broken
And frame his bones and grant them willingness?

*The unvalled sun shall flood the bright land,
And quicken sand.*

No fighter dies who falls for the still sleepers
Of coming time, who make his burial through the world.
There is no victory for him who takes
This given life, these wings:—

Boris Todrin

No bullet breaks

The light that moves a man across the skies
Doom filled upon his astral voyaging
That shall itself be flight forever sunward.
No hawk, no eagle dies
But broken lies—
Ashes will stir,
The phoenix shall arise.

SPANISH SOWING: 1938

Worn out fields where bomb and shell
Scattered iron seeds of hell
Grow their scarecrow crops. The torn
Bones will keep the roots of corn.

Now there is no single blade
Standing, where the live brigade
Wavered, mustered out and fled
To the armies of the dead.

Fighters grown upon the land
Shall be seeing where they stand,
Over the invaders' feet,
Broad backed regiments of wheat.
Boris Todrin

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GAUTIER VISITED SPAIN

A hundred years ago? Really that long
Since you crossed into Spain, keen to record
Its quiet olive hillscape quickened by song

Of sun-bred people, then lulled by legend-stored
Cathedrals? That year, too, the flowers faded
As they fade today in the convent-yard.

While you watched, near Irun, the purling jade
Bidassoa hugging her velvet banks,
Hoping to be the theme of a serenade,

Your branching thoughts were rudely felled by the clanking
Of a heavy hammer. There! half hid
In reeds, a peasant, moody-eyed and lank,

Pounding bullets flat on sandstone—lead
From recent gunfire, picked up in the fields—
A hard harvest, smelling of the dead,

And planted by the alien slayers—yet yielding
A price at market! What else could he glean
From land that war had swiftly, blindly wheeled

Kerker Quinn

Its engines over? Was he trying to clean
The soil of all that tore her breast apart?
Unhealed, he feared, she would not bear again,—

But soil's as sturdy as a Spaniard's heart!

Kerker Quinn

OCTOGENARIAN

He drowns all the morning now,
His eyes set on the plum tree bough.
He sees the blossoms, only them,
A glimmering whiteness on the stem.

Here is no tree with fruit to come;
He has forgot the leaf, the plum.
Left in this sunny place alone
He takes a harvest of his own.

Drowsily now, and childishly,
He waits the changing of his tree
To stranger whiteness, depths more deep,
To one great flower whose fruit is sleep.

Thelma Phlegar

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SIMPLE LEGEND

We built us a house, while
the compassionate hills lay around
and the sun made shadows for our
going out and blessed our coming in.

But nearby we found bones in the grass,
a bird ascended and threw down
note upon scolding note, and then
that day, too, ended at last.

Sometimes the hills crawled nearer
and said things we ought to have heard
in words, but we made of it music
with no consequence or hurt.

And with no literate faith we
gave the wolves of our bread;
if winter comes, we thought, we
shall be untouchable and bold.

Nothing came, no winter came, even
swans rode upon our lake, but
very soon the walls we had built
were inanimate no more;

David Cornel DeJong

they talked with the hills, they lay
in their arms at night, dew
hallowed everything, but we, left
small and alone grew a little afraid.

It was before snow came, when we
peering outside heard the swans
selling our flesh and saw the hills
grin at remembering our tenderness.

On a hoarse November while stripped
earth cowered around we ran,
leaving behind three old minds which
sometimes come whispering at night.

Then we run again, pursued by hill
and swan and wolf, understanding
at last we should not have found bones
but dandelions in the grass.

David Cornel DeJong

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TWO POEMS

THE WINNING OF THE WEST

I am Joe Grandys: I have gone at night
under the stars until the early light
came faint along the hills; and I have slept
in rock arroyos, where the shadows crept
while lizards watched me sleeping in the shade.
Then, when the sun was sinking, I have made
a careful fire beside my saddle-pack;
have eaten, and put pack and saddle back
on pony and lead-pony, and have gone
across the desert with the setting sun.

STRANGE NATURE

Why should nature seem to be
less than beautiful to me—
less, or more, or other than
it was to my vision when,
as a boy, I thought it all
new, and dearly beautiful?

Now there's terror in a rose;
there is strangeness now in those
hidden violets I'd find

William Stephens

(had I neither heart or mind)
curling near the roots of trees,
or in shadier crevices.

Now the petaled primrose grieves
if I try to part its leaves;
now the daisies in a field
show the surface of a shield,
and the grassblades in a lawn
are like swords to walk upon.

William Stephens

THE STROLLING GIRLS

As surely as spring dusk brings out the stars
Spring dusk brings out the strolling girls
Watching cars.

The bright blond girls, the slim dark girls in sweaters
Walking on proper errands to drug stores
Or mailing letters.

Their purposes in dusk are as mysterious
As the soft wanderings of twilight cats
And quite as serious.

Thomas W. Duncan

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TWO POEMS

THE VOICE

He shall arise at the voice of the bird.

Ecclesiastes

I listened dully as the skies
Grew white with day ; I did not rise,
But turned my face the more away.

Precise and clear, the affable bird
Declared the dawn ; I did not rise
Rejecting him as though unheard.

Ah, had my pillow been the ground
In deeper ground, a darker sheet
Covering me from head to feet,

I might have risen at the sound,
Each resurrecting bone had leapt
(I thought) ; but in the flesh I wept

And closed my ears and clamped my eyes.
I heard the voice! I did not rise.
The living clay was slow and surly
At starting grief so early.

Leonora Speyer

STAR-FEAR

What thing insistent urges me away
Out of the garden, the dark, familiar paths
I walk unswervingly, as were it day?

Here it is home. Each flower in its bed
Is known to me by name, by sleepy scent ;
Each bough, the one where I must bend my head

Is known, the nested bird within—I hear
A fledgling-robin murmur, half-awake—
Why do I turn? What is it that I fear?

It is these stars, immutable and wise!
Flaunting their fateful chart and peering, moving
As I do, I in my garden, they in their skies.

Intent and cold they watch, until I run
Back to the shadowy house, to bolt the door,
Shut windows swinging wide, and one by one,
Draw heavy curtains closer, make more light ;
Saying, "The stars are beautiful tonight."

Leonora Speyer

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TALK OF FRIENDS

We do not lack morality. We are
Corrupted by false doctrine. Having heard
The hollow voices we have followed them,
Touched their bright vestments, knelt before their shrines.
We heard the preaching from a hollow mouth,
Forgetting what so patiently was learned,
Declining into evil, soon we were
Committing sin against the blood, in mind
Then not in mind since time of mind was past.

I do not mean to be impertinent;
I speak with privilege, as closest friend,
We being private here, the night at hand.

Remember how we sailed our paper boats
Together, walking in the thorny yard
At nightfall toward the river; and we said
It would be dark before the boats came down
To port. Thorns scratched our legs as we turned home,
Calling goodnights to keep us from our fear.

True to the chart of flesh for homing voyage,
I think we should make haste, returning now,
Lest dark precede us and we lie alone
While memory splits our horizontal night
In vertical bisection of the shroud

George Marion O'Donnell

Through reconstruction of the toothpick mast,
Pinewhittled consummation which resists
The strongest gales in all our windy dreams.

We bathwarm children wander in the mist.

George Marion O'Donnell

IF IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE POLISHED
LEAVES

If in the language of the polished leaves
There be a passing hint of your recurrence,
Or if the intimate jargon of the eaves
Should suddenly smooth into a fair coherence
And tell me with a cautious certainty
Of your return—out where the farthest hem
Of time's most perilous strand welcomes the sea,
I would await your final stratagem;
But it is plain to me you cannot take
The journey as you said, nay as you swore—
And I so confident that you would break
The barrier, that I feared to leave my door!
Omnipotence devises, it would seem,
A master trap and baits it with a dream.

Florence Dickinson Stearns

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TWO POEMS

SPRING GRINDING

I was too young to shape an edge to steel
But not too young to turn the groaning wheel
Or fetch more water when the can ran dry.
Warm wind below, and over us the sky
All bright and blue, we were a pair to match.
There always was a hand to change, to snatch
Glimpses of pastures open under spring.
Coaxing the scythe edge wasn't everything.
The blade made songs along the watery track.
Pushing out hard, I felt the wheel push back
As if the steel alone were not enough,
As if it must put edge to human stuff
Just as the sun put edge to branch and boulder.
I thought of shapes to grind when I was older.

NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Now sleep the lights of village, every one,
The last lone walker to his door gone home,
The last late watcher at his mill wheel done.
Now in the silent streets small shadows roam,

Charles Malam

People the hollow hour, the vacant square,
Old walls, the ancient roofs, the soundless road.
Stars ride the windy reaches of the air.
A wasted moon moves to its cold abode.

On rocky hills, on broken pasture face
How like dark angels from an older time
The trees keep guard, each in familiar place,
While slow night lengthens and the shadows climb,
Looking far down the earth where valleys sweep
Deep in the peace of silence, deep in sleep.

Charles Malam

CEMETERY

Upon this hill the polished stones
Chant family pride in monotones
Above the inarticulate bones.

The spring drifts down, the swift grass spreads,
While over all a west wind treads,
Heel on the dated figureheads

In scorn of impresarios
Who hawk the spirit's cast-off clothes,
Who cry the dark decaying pose.

W. H. Gerry

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THE ANCIENT COURSE IS HERE

The ancient course is here,
The simple conspiracy of miracle
When clarity is the blind footman with wings.
Do you want a definition of destiny?
Then I will take you to a new place
Where dreams are frugal and the world a quick fact,
Where the dark waters run fast and bright,
Their swirl full of fallen suns.
No hope or promise, no other sound, have I against loneliness.
Only the brief paleness of silvered bodies riveted to a moment
And the tearing screams of vultures overhead
Softened awhile to a stealthy peace.
But should our scorn be loud enough
This rumor shall conscript the fiercest demons
To flit angelically through all our days.

Sydney Salt

THREE POEMS

I

In the grim valley the iron festering and
The veiled silence and the derelict hand
Muster the ghosts of the unaccountably lost
To gather in this valley where I am host.

In dual ambushade of eye and tongue
The moments hang nowhere and for long
The smudged words cannot touch these cripples;
The trees reach out for their fallen apples.

If it were only any winter but in this
When wonder's antics in the skull may miss
The magical seven or the three of love,
Miss what it means for me to live.

A shadow army from wise Crete's long sand,
They file this watery morning where the wind
Through skeleton walls moans their march
And the eye, seeing stones, imagines much :

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Sees on the snow the warrior's salute,
The ragged army and those we must shoot :
But in this valley Spring will never come :
Only this ruin which we call home

Raises its gaunt hands in attitude of prayer
Remembering summer's embrace. Despair
Beyond the easy solution waits ahead
Still to flourish when those and I are dead.

II

I will walk to your wish through images of dearth,
Over grass blades stabbing the bloodless snow,
On the smooth face of winter touching earth,
And give you the limp handshake of the scarecrow.
And what you will most wish for and desire
Is to live easily, be free from care.

To be free thus is indistinguishable from death :
The gaunt tree moving, ridiculous giraffe.
Under the lying stars your individual breath
Has the axe of wind to cut all to chaff.
You would see the year fall back on the tide
And the future be late for parade.

H. B. Mallalieu

In cottages children are hiding their heads,
In a candle's distorted gloom the dogs howl
And in cities clerks go to their circumspect beds
To a night where women shiver and wolves prowl,
To a land where the lovely and the lame may mix
Seeking what love or their pity lacks.

The dreamer is free only until he wakes. And I
In the general insomnia gave my dreams to you :
The lake we saw was probably all sky
Neither in nor under water, never blue ;
But what will be offered for the scenes
We saw after judgment on the world's sins ?

To walk into the wood, to watch the lark
Or the degenerate mole, to hope summer come
And sea on bare arms, to dismiss the park
Where every tree is perfect, to found a new home ;
While all the hills lie threatened by the marsh,
This is your impossible November wish.

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III

Everywhere in the past the unrecorded men,
Those who were not martyred or who did not fall,
May more have been their day than many, than
The deceptive perfection of the cathedral,
Than magical science or the heroic name.
And we who think of the summer as always as to-morrow
Must not imagine a season without sorrow:

To new acts man's responses may be the same.
When you look from this island across the sea,
Splendid with the wake of every ship you miss,
Do not be certain of an easy eternity,
Of a dream kingdom where the faithful kiss.
Be sure there will be something there to bless,
But not so certain that the alien coast
Has any original glory of which to boast,
Or final antidote to limp distress.

Here trees are hostile; the cliff's shadow spies
On hope's slow action. The gulls scream
The fantastic world of our youth, the lies
Of a Gothic hell, haunted, as real as the dream.

H. B. Mallalieu

Sometimes you pause within earshot of your doubt
Hearing a question's echo : and you hear
The macabre devils as they loudly appear
Shouting for a saviour to cast them out.

Thus there are times when we cannot be lost in each other :
When love must be seen as on the sands below
The narrow cliffs we both of us inhabit. We must smother
Sometimes the desire to change the sand to snow.
Thus there are hours when not to be lost is lying,
When neither sand nor snow nor the cliff's formation
Can make strict the contours of elation,
Nor can they frighten with their continual spying.
Let fortune become for a while our chaperone,

Until we are well enough to see ill clearly.
Still we may adopt the customary tone,
Love what we loved but perhaps less dearly.
So now while the fever handles our town
We hope to prevent as well as cure,
That the half-diseased be not considered pure,
Nor the certificate be taken for a crown.

H. B. Mallalieu

—and in this outer kingdom of grace or moral law man must accept what God or the State reveals. Mrs. Colum wants to be fair to the citizens of both kingdoms. She concedes the right of the artist “to work according to the eternal laws of his art.” On the other hand: “If the artist has a right to choose any material he wishes and the right to employ every means he can to make a lasting thing and defend it, the public also has the same right to defend what it has made, its rules and regulations for the convenient conduct of life.” In this statement I am struck by the curious opposition of “artist” to “public”—as though the creative person existed outside the human race and were engaged in a professional conspiracy to destroy it. What seems to me even more astonishing is the picture of the institutions of authority fighting, with their backs to the wall, against the embattled artists. Pity the poor, helpless, innocent State and her unfortunate sister, the Church, who have nothing to defend themselves with against the poets except wealth and power, the police, the military, the courts, the concentration camps, and, if need be, the gun! (The State, of course, feels no compunction about applying these same instruments of persuasion to the Church, when conflicting interests supervene to inhibit their sisterly affection.)

I cannot applaud the justness or moderation or even the intelligence of an assertion that “no public or law ought, in a civilized country, to have the right to suppress or destroy a work of art, although it has the right to censure and condemn it, or even, in cases, to limit its circulation.” If

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it is conceded that artists must eat, whoever condones the restriction of their market (because "the public" is displeased) extenuates the not very mild or benignant process of starving them out.

To grant authority to the ethical conscience over the aesthetic, no matter with what appeal for sweet reasonableness in action, is to accept the constitution and by-laws of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, to justify the anti-cultural ruffianism of local demagogues, to invite the disaster that has befallen art in the totalitarian states.

The theory of the two consciences is not only inexpedient, but also in flat contradiction of the evidence. Above the level of the balladist, and not infrequently at that level, the poet is confronted by the ineluctable necessity of making moral judgments. The ethical significance is not always so conspicuous as in the work of Dante, Goethe, Milton, Tolstoy, and Thomas Mann, but, however elusive, it is always there, the twin threads of good and evil running through the fabric. Mrs. Colum praises, elsewhere in her book, Coleridge's theory of the imagination. But Coleridge would have been horrified at the divorce of the imagination from moral imperatives. "No man," he wrote, "was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher." An imagination that is not healthy enough to assimilate ethical laws is too much of a weakling to face the rigors of poetry. The artist is everything that he can experience. Society responds to him, and a sympathetic, mutually enriching relation is achieved, when the communal

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life approximates in variousness and intensity the experience of its artists.

One of the reasons why modern poetry has appeared so obscure, cold, and baffling to the population is that it represents a multiplicity of phenomena and psychological adventure that can seem only eccentric to men in the grip of a routine that limits and conditions their spiritual as well as their physical reflexes. In his *Men of Mathematics* E. T. Bell remarks of Archimedes: "This is one of his titles to a modern mind: *he used anything and everything that suggested itself as a weapon to attack his problems.*" Of the truly contemporary poet—and it is necessary to be contemporary before one can be classic—it may be said that he incarnates and expresses the wild audacity of the modern mind. In this connection Thomas Mann writes:

Art, above all things, belongs in the sphere of the venturesome, the daring. It forever reaches out to extremes and never lacks that "touch of audacity" without which, according to Goethe, "no talent is conceivable." Art abhors the mediocre, as it abhors the cheap cliché, the trivial, the insipid and the base. . . .

An act of the imagination, the transmutation of the infinite particulars of experience into finite form, is the most complete operation of the mind, when it functions as "the organ of civilization." Nothing need be alien to it, for there is nothing that its masterful alchemy cannot transform. To speak of the imagination as a separate element of the mind—as the pure part, for example, that must be isolated from the coarser elements, lest it suffer contamination—is to fall into a paralyzing error. Mrs. Colum's theory of the two

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consciences leads her almost into absurdity when she writes:

He [the artist] has to make his work as sincere and as fine as he can, without allowing other provinces of human achievement to shove their laws or rules onto him. Pure literature, therefore, can never be propaganda, for propaganda is the turning aside of literature from the expression of life, which is its field, to the praise or advertisement of some policy, some endeavor, some side line of life, which may represent a public good.

What "pure" literature is I do not know, nor why a side line is any less a part of life than a line. Whenever people begin to talk about propaganda—and nearly every one is ready to begin at the drop of a hat—I am reminded of those demoralizing advertisements that warn us that we ourselves can't tell when we're "offensive." Propaganda is what somebody else is guilty of when he advocates something that you don't believe in.

Mrs. Colum exhibits the nature of this fallacy when she refers, in another context, to the Declaration of Independence as a work of American literature. It is; but it is also, like Milton's *Areopagitica* and the Communist Manifesto, a provocative document—a piece of propaganda, if you will—and you could not read it aloud in Jersey City today without being clapped into jail. When the word "literature" is employed as though it were a badge of honor to be pinned on the breast of a Nobel Prize winner but not on any lesser mortal's common, run-of-the-mill breast, the critic is enabled to exclude peremptorily from his sacred garden any writer whose manners or opinions annoy him. Actually, the difference between the works of Jonathan Swift and those, say,

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of Brann the Iconoclast is one of quality and not of kind, so that we ought to speak of "good" literature in comparison with "bad" literature instead of "literature" as opposed to "non-literature." Any valid critical method must be able to note and define such qualitative differences without establishing a Lipari for political offenders.

The artist need not apologize for being tormented and driven by humanitarian motives. Every true disciple of the creative intelligence is, to borrow Zola's epitaph, a moment in the conscience of man. In a time of the breaking of nations and classes the artist suffers the violence of the race, its corruption, and its deep, searing agony of hope. Like the victim-hero of Kafka, he stands in the prisoner's dock and is accused. Of what precisely he is accused he does not know, nor does it matter, since the namelessness of his crime does not minimize his guilt. The rules of the court are preposterously unintelligible, but that does not matter either, for by being what he is, imperfect, traduced, and human; by standing on trial, in his skin and with all his heritage; by receiving into himself the wounds of his brotherhood, he seizes on his destiny and adds it to the historic sum.

The past is forever dying; it needs continually to be revived, lest it suffer dissolution and sift into oblivion. Malraux has expressed the view that the supremely ethical function of a work of art is not only to create itself but to re-create the long tradition that has made it possible. As the human embryo recapitulates the evolutionary development of the primate body, so the poem repeats for us man's

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spiritual ascent, identifying whoever shares in its beauty with those obscure thousands under the hill of time who once climbed . . . and climb again . . . the forbidding slope. Without that identification, without that triumphant leap of sympathy back to the Cro-Magnon cave artists, the singers of the Psalms, the clay-befriending worker at the potter's wheel, and all such fellows everywhen and everywhere—without that healing and redeeming bond, time itself would crumble and expose the worm. There is only one artist, the true, recurrent undying wanderer, the eternally guilty, invincibly friendly man.

A purged and etiolated art, one separated from the desire for a good life, is vain and unfructifying. The artist—and this is why the dictators fear him—will speak, because he must, for those souls and values that have been dispossessed; ironically, tragically cry out with the guilty heart of those who have dispossessed them or permitted the usurpation. Even in the abstract, without overt accusation, a good poem rejects all bad poetry and all loose thinking. The aim of the authoritarian state is to fasten on the population a common, changeless, and submissive mask. The artists are squashed or expelled, because, being independent makers of masks whose virtue is to permit man to see himself perfect and ennobled, they compete with the national monopoly in false-faces. Against the superimposition on civilization of the State-manufactured *persona*, the artist, with those who stand beside him, forms the last line of resistance, tougher than armies, for armies find it easier to win a war than a victory. The

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general and the Führer, though they may fight against each other, are both of them, in the end, face-grinders. You will find in the soldier's kit a bundle of undifferentiated masks.

What hope we have lies in the single, integrating, humanitarian conscience of the men of culture, nourished by participation in the tremendous striving of the masses for a life less mean, less blighted, less ignoble, more light and free. We need to turn from the men of will and order, those with the fanatic righteous eye and the unmarried ethical principle, who have no dedication but to the rules and regulations for the efficient conduct of life in an organized society. "O ye Religious," cried outraged Blake, "discountenance every one among you who shall pretend to despise Art and Science!" The New Moralists of our age, with their death-dealing hatreds and abominations, have taught us to understand the sterilizing passion of the desert saints and the hitherto almost inconceivable brutality of the holy massacres, inquisitions, and wars. Moralism divides—church from church, nation from nation, race from race, and man from man.

If Morality was Christianity, Socrates was the Saviour.
Art degraded, Imagination denied, War governed the Nations.

To those who complain of the futility of creative effort in a time so shaken, I would say that no time has been in greater need of a compelling and representative art. The only measure of a man's usefulness is the extent to which he exercises his talent, according to the laws of his own growth, for the common good. The artist is wasted driving nails. Let the painter go back to his easel and the writer to his

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desk. Whatever has long endured in the veneration of mankind—even the Eternal Being—has been the product of the poetic genius. It would be arrogant for us to presume that the most benevolent of deities would be willing forever to save a civilization that does not carry in its heart those two companion humilities named by Keats: the principle of beauty and the memory of great men.

Stanley J. Kunitz

ONE VIEW OF HOUSMAN

MORE than half of Mr. Gow's book¹ is devoted to a bibliography of Housman's numerous writings, almost entirely on subjects connected with classical scholarship. The few pages that list his work on English literature or more general subjects do not profess to be complete. Of more immediate interest are the fifty-odd pages that contain a memoir of the poet-scholar. The two men did not know each other until Housman went to Cambridge, and the treatment of the early years is slight. In the account of the later years attention is chiefly paid to Housman, the scholar. There is consequently no homage paid to the vulgar taste that is more interested in poets than in poetry. Yet occasionally in this book and more particularly in the small volume of anecdote and reminiscence written by his relatives and

¹*A. E. Housman, A Sketch*, by A. S. F. Gow. Macmillan.

One View of Housman

friends we can see the beginning of a Housman legend, a new creation, neither the man nor the poet, a treatment that has affected posthumously the two Lawrences.

The result is plain. The problems that are posed, if we permit them to be, by this personality are so perplexing to amateurs of soul analysis that, just as early admirers of Housman's poetry confused that poetry with their own personalities, so their successors will now confuse the poetry with the poet's personality, finding elucidation for the one in the other and becoming bad scholars and worse critics. And yet there is some justification for this. Housman's poetry needs finally a key, a key which can come only from our knowledge of the poet. This is really an indictment of the poetry, but to Housman it would not have seemed a defect. His own taste in English poetry was plainly a preference for that poetry which might be interpreted as personal statement. His formula, "transfusion of emotion," implies a communication theory of poetry in its most inchoate form. But most of us for whom poetry is a making or a creation, and not a communication, will find flaws in his work arising from the effort to communicate, and what others regard as code or incantation will seem bad workmanship.

If we could, we would avoid recourse to consideration of the person in our effort to make judgments about the poetry. At first sight it seems possible. The poetry seems to be there, bare and plain, obvious to inspection, inviting a quick approval or disapproval. And usually when in our youth we first

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read this verse we gave our whole-hearted approval. The forms are simple and traditional; they do not contradict the subject matter that they carry, nor do they require any extension of the normal reader's sympathy. The subject matter is general to mankind, the familiar topics of centuries of human experience. The style is easy and chaste; Wordsworth and the simpler romantic poets have trained our sensibilities to its ready acceptance. The symbols are coherent and concrete without obscurity. They make little demand upon any reader's erudition or ingenuity. As a result, Housman's audience was as wide and as acquiescent as any in the last half century.

But repeated reading brings confusion and question. The forms are simple, to be sure, but they are also mechanical. Four and five line stanzas are reiterated and arbitrary; the iambic and anapaestic movement becomes perpetual and boring. The frequency of feminine endings and the tight and heavy rhyme-schemes produce a monotony which makes us question the poet's extent of talent in simple verse-handling. Working as Housman did in short breathed lyrics—his longer poems are always the weakest—he was unable to create much interest or value by the structure of the poem. There is always little interior direction or movement, the last stanza has usually seen no advance or change from the first, except where there has been the surprise twist of the conventional epigram.

The subject matter is general and at the same time remarkably limited: "Gather ye rosebuds," suicide, military glory,

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the transitoriness of beauty and love, nostalgia, the certainty of death—in general, the tendency of the earth to revolve. These banalities, expressed by a banal technique, have grown out of an attitude that must be described as adolescent. The embittered Epicureanism, the pessimistic conception of destiny, the whine about the laws of God and man, all seem somewhat less than half a philosophy. The order that Housman created in his own experience rested upon categories that deny admission to most of human life. His wisdom is trivial, tricked out with a self-advertising stoicism.

The style is easy, but its very ease betrays its essential carelessness. The word that might startle comes rarely. The precise and unexpected word that might define the poet's intention and compel a readjustment of the reader's expectancy never occurs. Perhaps *Bring, in this timeless grave to throw* provides the few exceptions. Normally the reader is never required to dissolve long united connotations nor to create new combinations. He merely has to follow the poet in a usual groove. The "transfusion of emotion" is actually only a reimpression by stereotyped words, phrases, and ideas.

The symbols of Housman's poetry are concrete and coherent, but meaningless without an act of faith on the part of the reader. The gallows, sunset, scarlet uniforms, clay, the perpetual "lads" and the occasional "lasses" are irritating and banal. They are cinema-stuff, the residue of the tedious books we read and dreamed about in childhood. They operate only if we are willing to assume their validity, if we surren-

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der reflection and merge with the illiterate. Notably the religious symbols (as in *The Carpenter's Son* and *Easter Hymn*) assume an attitude of conventional belief, and the intended shock can be secured only in that case. One must cite as an exception to Housman's usual symbolism *The Welsh Marches*. Here the symbol of the Saxon and the ideas of early England and strife that are evoked develop, obscurely but interestingly, the theme of the poem, internal conflict. The reader's imagination has been released and permitted to respond without prejudice. But normally Housman depends upon just such prejudice and his poetry consequently depends for its popularity upon mere fashion.

The predicament of the simple reader is plain. Here is verse which can excite and move him and which makes large statements that claim his faith. If he submits, however, to these claims he is in the end baffled, for the poetry does not justify its statements nor for all its apparent effect does it advance his understanding. The simple reader is unwilling or unable to realize that Housman has merely imparted rhythmical form and conventionally poetic diction to the reader's own chaotic, limited and banal experience. Consequently he hopes that there is something more, that this is poetry *à clef*, and that a biography will help matters out. But unfortunately neither Mr. Gow's memoir, pleasant reading though it is, nor other works of testimony by friends and relatives really help. Housman was reticent and solitary. There remain the gossip that circulates in common rooms and reviewers' articles and the dark hints of eventual revela-

tions. The simple reader must be content with these.

But another problem arises for other readers even though its final statement may be in terms of the same elements. Housman was not only a writer of poetry, he was also one of the first scholars of the world. The three books of verse may be disregarded but the prose that constituted the great bulk of his writing cannot be. The prefaces to his editions of Latin poets and even his casual articles and reviews are the work of one of the few contemporary masters of prose writing. Here is excellent wit-writing, a disciplined style that was perfect for its purpose and which transcended its purpose so as to make the minutiae of an *apparatus criticus* matters of immediate concern and delight to the least scholarly by-stander. Here the living emotions of hatred, scorn and contempt that were blurred and reduced in his verse have received their fit exposition and by the excellence of their form have become general to mankind. Here also when Bentley or Heinsius is named is the honest expression of admiration and love which were furtive and indefinite and impersonal in the poems. The qualities that make a great classical scholar, such as accuracy and saturation in a language and literature, have no necessary relation to the qualities of a poet, and there is no reason to believe that Housman's scholarship had the slightest connection with his verse. But it provided the substance for remarkable prose.

Housman declared that he was not a literary critic and *The Name and Nature of Poetry* proved that he was right. It is neither incisive nor persuasive; it is merely personal.

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However, his fragmentary parody of a Greek tragedy is actually excellent criticism, in large part of English translations, but also, in part, of Greek tragedy itself. Its implications as to what we really understand and appreciate in Greek tragedy are unpleasantly satirical. It suggests, as does the tone and structure of much of his prose, that his literary genius found wit and satire natural forms of expression, and that it was alien to the romantic lyric.

Such a judgment involves what one would wish to avoid, a judgment about Housman's personality. Yet recourse to such aid is inevitable when one contemplates the discrepancies of his achievement. His experience, which seemed to him to require a sentimental expression, became whole only when he secured the comparative detachment of prose and satire. Further than that there is as yet insufficient evidence for analysis, and it is doubtful whether in any case the problem would be one for a literary critic. He plainly suffered from his ability to live in compartments; his knowledge of Latin poetry ought to have shown him the weaknesses in his own. He suffered also from the fashions of his time. Henley's *Invictus* had established a mode of self-assertion which received only slightly less blatant expression from Housman, and what passed for a philosophy in Hardy was plainly congenial. But he did not have Hardy's poetic skill, and his verse must serve simply as a belated document to illustrate that once popular phrase, *fin de siècle*.

Lawrence Leighton

REVIEWS

"LOST BETWEEN WARS"

U. S. I., by Muriel Rukeyser. Covici-Friede.

MURIEL RUKEYSER'S first book, *Theory of Flight*, provoked public predictions for her future and the future of revolutionary letters which recur to us now, in the face of her present production, as having been somewhat extravagant. This does not mean that she has lost the qualities which caused her work to be considered in many quarters a signal for the revival of poetic energy; rather, that she has not been able to eliminate ideological immaturities and technical weaknesses which, while fairly easily forgiven in a poet's first work, become severe impediments to poetic progress if they are seen to persist in a later volume. Allen Tate, writing an introduction to a young poet's first offering, advised against his being watched too closely, observing that "the constant speculation about the future of young poets afflicts them with a paralyzing self-consciousness." While such speculation seems to have produced the reverse of paralysis in Miss Rukeyser, the result appears to have been no less damaging. I feel sure that the publication of many of the poems in this book, if the author is as important a poet as I think she is, will become an increasing source of embarrassment to her.

One admires Miss Rukeyser's inventiveness in the first section, *Book of the Dead*; and one admires also her intentions,

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which are ambitious to the point of audacity. The *Book of the Dead* is intended as part of a planned longer work which will "produce an evaluation of the Atlantic Coast of the United States in terms of the U. S. highway which runs down it from Maine to Key West, and in terms, also, of the people and the movements which have made the seaboard the most varied and exciting in the world." A highway, one supposes, is a good enough starting-point for such an evaluation, but unfortunately the signs of the road lead her into fields that have been more adequately explored and more tersely recorded by journalists.

Critics who interpret literature from a Marxian viewpoint have dispensed with the elementary question of what poetry should or should not concern itself with, the arguments against the use of propaganda in poetry having been refuted, by this time, by the opposition's own examples; but the larger question of the most appropriate means by which the poet can make effective use of propaganda continues to be debated. I favor Miss Rukeyser's more subjective poetry rather than that modeled after leaflets. Not that leaflet writing does not call for an ability of no small proportions; but leaflet writing, as well as poetry trying for the same effect, would appear to be an immediate and transitory art as opposed to one which aims for permanence.

It is the middle section of Miss Rukeyser's book which deserves serious attention. Here she writes not as a self-appointed emissary of justice out for an investigation, or a Carrie Nation with a political hatchet on a Cook's tour, but

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rather as a woman who has her own maladjustments which she places against and relates to the larger universal ones. This section is really her book, 59 pages out of 114, a group long and good enough to stand alone. The poems expand beyond their personal motivation, making use of bold modern language and the shocking image, arriving finally at inevitable discoveries:

we cast about for love, lost between wars,
alone in the room and every streetlight out.
Who's to rise to it, now that ruin's made,
now that we're petrified in the pale looking-glass,
our glossy scars, our books, our loss,
caught in the narrowest final pass?
And all our heroes are afraid.

The Flashing Cliff, The Child Asleep, Course, Lover as Fox, The Drowning Man, Girl at Play, are fine achievements which have not been duplicated to my knowledge by any other poet of the thirties. It is interesting, if disturbing, to note that many of the poems in this section are among the most obscure in the book, filled with complicated symbolism and imagery which for its origin is indebted to surrealism. The meaning of the poems is rarely difficult, but the final effect is as if the poet doubted the value of her content and hid it beneath a barrage of unintelligible language. A spasmodic use of articles, rapid-fire associational images, and distortions of structure do not tend to make the reader's going any easier. But the sustained intensity, the energy, are still there.

If Muriel Rukeyser can learn to control her fondness for rhetoric and can be convinced that not every subject which

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comes to mind or every experience in which she plays a part is a proper subject for poetry, she may yet—since she is still young—fulfill the hopes which have been placed in her.

Willard Maas

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL'S POETRY

Sebastian, by Rayner Heppenstall. London: J. M. Dent & Sons.

We hear rumors of a full new batch of young English poets who are occupied with religion. So far their works are not easily available in this country. Among the younger poets we do know, both English and American, a purely social gospel is more popular.

Rayner Heppenstall's latest book of poetry, *Sebastian*, would be interesting if only because it is occupied with the relation of a Christian individual to God. But it is, moreover, a distinguished book. The ambit is less wide than Eliot's. The frame of reference is less far-reaching and exciting, both intellectually and from the point of view of sensibility. But one can be especially thankful for the complete lack of the charlatan in Mr. Heppenstall. We are never free enough from those poets whose entire poetic life consists of adopting significant postures before an effective décor, not to be grateful for such masculine honesty and such tautness of mind as this poet shows. Poetry of young authors is apt to sag, to give the effect of having gone out to find something to write about. Mr. Heppenstall's is full-bodied.

Rayner Heppenstall's Poetry

This reviewer, at least, would have been more satisfied if the author occasionally turned his gaze from the white light of beatitude. One feels that the point of view expressed in this book is, for the poet, a very special one, not assimilated into his general living. This may well be false; in these matters it is hard to assign causes for what one feels, although one feels with a conviction only deepened by successive readings. But one would like here a poetry that was not so dryly expository and ratiocinative, which caught up the reader's everyday imagination into a new context. One thinks, for example, of Donne, who will speak of God and his mistress in the same poem and in so doing throw both ideas into dramatic relief. Or of Eliot who, always mindful of his audience, will bring the burden of his speech home to them with such lines as:

O miserable cities of designing men,
O wretched generation of enlightened men,
Betrayed in the mazes of your ingenuities,
Sold by the proceeds of your proper inventions.

One could wish for a tighter juxtaposition of contrasting ideas; and that, when speaking of the world of sense, the poet would give it sensuous body instead of obscuring its outlines with the white light of his vision.

Mr. Heppenstall's first volume of poetry appeared in England in 1935. I have not been able to secure a copy of it. His prose volumes, *Middleton Murry* and *Apology for Dancing*, show the same cleanness of language and subtlety of intellection as the present poems. But it was significant to find that Mr. Heppenstall's prose is more distinguished as

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prose than the present volume as poetry. That is to say that the peculiarly heightened quality of poetry, the immediacy of impact which make it a separate sort of speech are not sufficiently in evidence here. Yet it is important to say that this is very *fine* language, stamped with taste, showing an admirable restraint and distrust of the "lush habit of speech." At his best Mr. Heppenstall attains the dignity and quiet music of the following:

I will have patience. Above all things, I will be patient.
I knelt, last year,
With John of Ruysbroeck. And he showed me how it is possible,
for the small flame
Of the soul, to be blown into a conflagration that laps
God round whole,
How the spirit will bound up like an arrow, like the
strenuous lark.

William Gilmore

THE SOURCES OF OUR THOUGHT

The Modern Mind, by Michael Roberts. Macmillan.

Mr. Roberts' study of poetry and religion is level-headed, magnanimous and pessimistic. His book is a defense of each, by an attack on their misrepresentations. His theme is the non-scientific use of the mind. At a time when most discussions of it are degraded by hysteria, he aims no guns at reason.

He traces religious decay to that "realism" by which St. Thomas attempted to digest Aristotle for the Church. St. Thomas argued from particular to universal to restate a past; it was too easy for many others to argue in the same way in order to command a future. Thomas's axioms for

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dealing with sensuous, impressions were the basis of his theology, but he was interested in verbal proofs. Among the scientists who welcomed his method and used it for other purposes, all knowledge which was not quantitative gradually lost ground. In philosophy, Hobbes resulted.

The Nineteenth Century, sold out intellectually to quantities, imagined that Darwin proposed a great dilemma and thus stated the religious problem falsely. It was not a question of either the "facts" of religion or the "facts" of science. It was a question of the differing sources and uses of scientific and religious knowledge.

There is not much that is startling in this analysis. There is even less that surprises in Roberts' study of poetry's decreasing prestige. But the development of his point of view serves to introduce a useful study of that particular subservience to physical science which seems to underly Tennyson as much as Housman. One questions, however, the implication that both were weak in logic rather than sensibility, and victims of the times. The essence of Housman is the rigidity of his tone; Tennyson alone can be accused of an unwillingness to use his head.

The postures of poetry and religion are rightly seen by Roberts as parts of the same crisis of order. He compares Herbert and Vaughan to Housman and Hardy in order to show the limitations of the recent men, and succeeds. But the reasons that he adduces are not all the reasons, nor the best. First, devotional poetry is essentially different from other poetry; and the metaphysicals are not superior because

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of their acts of faith. Second, Herbert's personal maturity exceeds that of Housman or Hardy, and he is poetically superior to them by the greater control of language which follows that.

Roberts' study of the church's dilemma is more especially a study of Catholicism. His fine dismissal of false barriers to faith, accenting again the half-unwilling materialism of the Nineteenth Century, is excellent. Re-emphasizing the foolishness of faiths based on scientific data, he neatly disembowels the atom-and-pulley-deities of contemporary theism. He does not fail to show how the churches in general have invited their own wreck by trying to unite a fundamentalist logic with a materialist temper. His argument for the usefulness of a church to the healthy-minded who need it is both clear and credible. As might be expected, it is on the theological ground, where the assumption of free will and the examination of purposes is concerned, that he is strongest in argument and most useful in context.

His weakest point is that, like many others, he will not sufficiently recognize the predicament of the religious temperament which is willing to turn to a church's authority but cannot find a respectable one. For he does admit the slowness of authority and hierarchy to purge themselves for the immediate task. And it should be added that even if most churches should revise their theologies intelligently they could not regain the respect they have already lost—no matter how necessary and useful that redirection is right now. There is a difference between the tradition of logic, which is theology,

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and the tradition of forms, which is religious emotion. Complete respect cannot be regained without revision of forms as well as motives. And the venal tactic perpetually postpones this.

His separation of church and state makes no sharp reference to the present. His idea of a church as an anti-centrist force necessarily does. Totalitarianism as a heresy indicates a supreme opportunity for religious conservatism. Although he does not mention them, the Hitler-Niemöller quarrels are an instance. But is there not still the usual difficulty of defining the heresy? Are all non-capitalist or non-feudal states totalitarian? Mr. Roberts does not suggest the difference in historical relationships which make an anti-centrist church valuable in Germany, valueless in Russia.

Since Roberts' interest in poetry turns principally toward verse as a devotional discipline, his view of it is intensely limited. He suggests, without adding any new order to the idea, that current disorder in poetry as in many other activities results from a misplaced faith in "natural" law. He takes the trouble to explode anew the notion that Marxism is a religion of some kind. It is to be regretted that he does not investigate the quasi-religious elements of some "Marxist" poetry. And it is too bad that he finds no use for Hopkins, a subject on his immediate course, in his study of the Nineteenth Century.

Roberts is level-headed because he sees through the nonsense of modern theisms and spiritualisms; he is magnanimous because all his "heresies" are treated with a shrewd sense

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of their limited usefulness; he is pessimistic because the strongest statement he can make for religion as an institution is: "The churches may recover from their lethargy as the universities recovered at the end of the eighteenth century."

It is more likely that the accumulating burdens of a scientific civilization will, in succeeding crises, create a new paganism. Then the witch doctors will alternatively terrify and soothe the populations with miracles of social organization. Faith will not require demonstration in a world in which the value of human life sharply decreases, but its forms will be those dictated by the most hypnotic madmen. Worship of the sky, stones, trees, and human beings is closer at hand than most people believe.

Reuel Denney

NEWS NOTES

A number of interesting books by poets have been announced for publication this year by the London firms of Faber & Faber and Chatto & Windus. Among these are new collections of poems by Yeats, Prokosch, and MacNeice, and new plays by Eliot and Spender. Some of our readers have asked what our practice is in regard to reviewing English editions. We reply that we have no hard and fast policy. When an American edition has been scheduled for early publication, we usually prefer to wait until the book has been issued in this country and is available to readers. When no American edition has been announced or promised, we sometimes print a review on the basis of the English edition, to keep our readers informed, and as a notice to publishers that the book in question is an outstanding one and should be considered for American publication. An instance of this is the review of Rayner Heppenstall in the present issue.

A new life of Keats, *Adonais* by Dorothy Hewlett, has just been published in an American edition by Bobbs-Merrill. This unearths a number of facts not related in former biographies of the poet;

lacking the monumental proportions of Amy Lowell's work, it has the advantages of a compact form, a readable style, and a scholarly caution against overstatement. Our cursory first reading shows no mention of the last living person to bear the Keats family name, Miss Alice Keats, the poet's grandniece, now living in Urbana, Ohio. Dorothy Tyler, a Detroit correspondent who visited Miss Keats, writes us: "This daughter of one of the sons of George Keats is active and alert, and though she had been described to me as a shy little person who could best be approached through her devotion to the poetry of Keats, I did not find her precisely so. I was delighted by what seemed to me a striking physical resemblance to the poet, not only in her small, compact, well-turned figure, but in facial expression and features, a characteristic tilt of the head, and especially in her large dark eyes. The resemblance to the portrait by Severn is especially notable. . . . I was interested to learn that she was on the side of her grandfather and Sir Sidney Colvin in her opinion of Fanny Brawne." *Adonais* will be reviewed in a later issue.

A modern streamlined version of the literary banquet was recently achieved by the Friends of American Writers at their annual Award Dinner, held at the Palmer House in Chicago. The feature of this enjoyable occasion was the presentation of a one thousand dollar award to the young novelist, William Maxwell—a record literary prize for the middle west, and one of the largest anywhere. In addition to this, a contribution of one hundred dollars was made to POETRY. Mrs. James Cooney, the president, gave a brief and eloquent talk on the importance of cultural values in these times; and the guests of honor, most of whom spoke for about a minute apiece, were deftly introduced by the toastmistress, Mrs. Samuel James. We acknowledge with pleasure the good wishes of this society, which is one we are particularly proud to have on our list of Guarantors. It has distinguished itself for result-producing activity without fanfare, for wisdom and adventurousness in its prize awards, and for throwing an annual party in refreshing contrast to the usual grim event.

Good occasional poems are sufficiently uncommon to demand notice. We congratulate Mount Holyoke College for having inspired, on the occasion of its recent centennial, the lively sequence of *Hundred Year Poems* by Roberta Teale Swartz. These poems, which have been issued in brochure, are full of vivid and spontaneous lines; their unforced gaiety is the best tribute that could be paid to a college by a poet graduate. The closing verses have a general application:

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"Your health, Mount Holyoke—those, who know the rule,
Text, method, fundamentals, but profess
A college is a place where someone learns
Unfolding his own answers, like the ferns."

The Radio Division of the Federal Theatre has inaugurated a series of weekly programs, "Exploring the Arts and Sciences," on Fridays at 9:45 P.M. over WQXR. One of the recent broadcasts, entitled "New Poetry Coming of Age," was devoted to an interview with Sydney Salt, author of *Christopher Columbus and Other Poems*. Mr. Salt diagnosed the modern poet's dilemma as follows: "The younger poets sacrificed too readily the metaphysical problems in poetry, the inner meaning and struggle of man, for the actual conflict in its more outward forms; just as the elder poets persist in sacrificing the actual scene for metaphysical implications. Today we find the actual world at variance with the inner vision of man—the basic equilibrium of life broken. And these two camps represent the split in our life. But man's primal hunger is for unity in life, in other words for vision and action to be whole. . . . It is not a new struggle, although perhaps a more bitter one, between the old and the new, and what must emerge is a synthesis."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, of Providence, R. I., was born in 1910 in Haverhill, Mass., went to Brown University, worked for a time on the editorial staff of *The Providence Journal*, and received our Guarantor's Prize in 1935. A book of his poems, *Biography for Traman*, was published last year by Covici-Friede.

E. B. MALLALIEU, of England, is one of the young poets mentioned by D. S. Savage in his London letter, printed in our February issue. Mr. Mallalieu's work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Left Review*, *The Listener*, *Twentieth Century Verse*, etc. He has not yet published a volume.

LEONORA SPEYER, who divides her time between New York and the Black Forest, is a well-known contributor, the author of several books of poems including *Fiddler's Farewell* and *Naked Heel*. She was awarded the Pulitzer prize in 1926.

DAVID CORNEL DEJONG was born in Holland and brought to this country at the age of 13. After leaving his home in Grand Rapids,

Notes on Contributors

Mich., he attended Duke and Brown Universities, and has since lived in New York City and Providence, R. I., where he collaborated in editing the verse magazine, *Smoke*. Recently awarded a Houghton Mifflin Fellowship, he is now working on a novel.

GEORGE MARION O'DONNELL was born in Midnight, Miss., in 1914, has contributed verse and prose to *POETRY*, *The Southern Review*, etc., and is the author of *Return and Other Poems* (Alcestis Press) with an introduction by John Crowe Ransom.

CHARLES MALAM, a native of Vermont, was educated at Middlebury College and attended Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship. He is the author of two books of poems, *Spring Plowing* and *Upper Pasture*. Present domicile, Astoria, L. I.

SYDNEY SALT is a Philadelphian who after "considerable wandering of the states" now lives in New York City. He has published two books of poems, *Thirty Pieces*, and the recent *Christopher Columbus*.

WILLIAM STEPHENS, born in Utah, has been a salesman, a laborer, a newspaper editor, etc., and is now working in Chicago on *Esquire-Coronet*.

THOMAS W. DUNCAN, of Des Moines, Ia., was born in 1905 and educated at Harvard, has worked on newspapers and trouped the middle west as an actor. Author of a successful novel, *O Chataqua*, as well as a book of poems, *Elephants at War*.

In addition to Mr. Mallalieu, the following poets appear here for the first time:

BORIS TODRIN is a native and resident of Brooklyn. In 1937 he was graduated from Columbia, where he is now doing advanced work. As an undergraduate, he edited *The Columbia Review* and received several awards for poetry. A book of his poems, *7 Men*, will be published in the fall by Putnam's.

TOM BOGGS, editor, journalist, and radio commentator, was born in Pittsburgh in 1905, and now lives in New York. Author and compiler of several books, including the recent anthology *51 Neglected Lyrics*, he is at present editing *Lyrics in Brief*, a collection of little-known lyrics from longer poems.

FLORENCE DICKINSON STEARNS, of Richmond, Va., has had a varied career as journalist, advertising writer, teacher of verse technique, and as a contributor of poems to many magazines, including *Voices*, *The Lyric*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, etc. For three years she was president of the Poetry Society of Virginia.

KERKER QUINN is on the English faculty of the University of Illinois. He was editor of the literary quarterly, *Direction*, and has

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contributed poetry and criticism to *The Yale Review*, *The Virginia Quarterly*, *The New Republic*, etc.

THELMA PHLEGAR, of Bluefield, Va., is at present teaching English and doing graduate work at Ohio State University. Her poems have appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies.

All but one of this month's prose writers are familiar contributors to POETRY:

STANLEY J. KUNITZ, now resident in New Hope, Pa., is well known as poet and critic. He is editor of *The Wilson Bulletin for Librarians* and the author of a book of poems, *Intellectual Things*. LAWRENCE LEIGHTON, a new contributor, was born in Portland, Me., in 1904, and is now teaching Greek and Latin at Harvard. Some of our readers will remember his critical articles in *The Hound and Horn*. WILLARD MAAS, who has appeared frequently here as a poet, is the author of *Fire Testament*. He lives in New York City. REUEL DENNEY, of Buffalo, is also well known as a poet, though he appears for the first time in our prose section. WILLIAM GILMORE, a native of Evanston, Ill., was educated at Harvard, and was formerly on the staff of *The Brooklyn Eagle*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Land of the Free, by Archibald MacLeish. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Said Before Sunset, by Frederick Mortimer Clapp. Harper & Bros.

The Fountain and the Bough, by Eileen Hall. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Hawk on the Wind, by August Derleth. Ritten House, Philadelphia.

Saul King of Israel, by Victor S. Starbuck. University of No. Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

White Moment, by Mabel Posegate. Dorrance & Co.

Breath of the Spirit, by Sister Maura. Macmillan Co., Toronto.

Songs by the Wayside, by Stanton A. Coblentz. Wings Press, N. Y.

ANTHOLOGIES:

American Naval Songs and Ballads, edited by Robert W. Neeser. Yale Univ. Press.

The Oxford Book of Greek Verse in Translation, edited by T. F. Higham and C. M. Bowra. Oxford Univ. Press.

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CRITICISM? See Edmund Wilson's essays on Flaubert and Henry James, William Troy on D. H. Lawrence, Lionel Trilling on John Dos Passos, Lionel Abel on Ignazio Silone, F. W. Dupee on Andre Malraux, and reviews by R. P. Blackmur, F. O. Matthiessen, Harry Levin, Philip Horton, Morton D. Zabel.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE? See Meyer Schapiro on "An Architect's Utopia"; Sidney Hook on "Some Uses and Abuses of Semantics"; Dwight Macdonald on "The New Yorker"; Philip Rahv on "Trials of the Mind"; William Phillips on "Esthetic of the Founding Fathers"; Andre Gide's "U.S.S.R. Reconsidered."

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A total of \$1,000 will be awarded in prizes.

This nation won an independent existence not by some process of abstract thought but because her men and women *burned* for liberty. And now the terrifying complications of a machine civilization have bred new forces which threaten the kind of government we call democracy and, with it, our hard-won and long-cherished freedom. Where are the poets who can compel us to maintain our liberty?

In relating this poetry competition to the major world issue of the day, the Editors are not seeking to offer a theme but merely to strike a keynote. It is hoped to secure clear, uncomplicated texts which may be set to music.

The Editors hope that many leading American poets will be moved to enter the competition which has been divided into groups, with prizes for each, as follows:

A—GENERAL PUBLIC

1st Prize \$300 2nd Prize \$150 3rd Prize \$50

B—COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

1st Prize \$150 2nd Prize \$100 3rd Prize \$50

C—SECONDARY-SCHOOL STUDENTS

1st Prize \$100 2nd Prize \$60 3rd Prize \$40

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The Olivet Writer's Conference, of Olivet College, Michigan, offers a Fellowship for 1939 covering all costs of the Conference, to the prize-winning contestant who, in the opinion of the Conference admissions committee, seems most likely to benefit by attendance at the Conference.

CONSOLATION PRIZES

A copy of "The Complete Rhyming Dictionary," edited by Clement Wood, will be awarded to each of the 50 contestants who seem most likely to profit by it.

JUDGES—Padraic Colum, William Allan Neilson, Carl Van Doren

INSTRUCTIONS—No poem is to exceed 40 lines in length. Manuscripts must be addressed to the Poetry Contest Editor, THE FORUM, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York City; and must be mailed before midnight of June 30, 1938. Under no circumstances will any manuscript be returned or its receipt acknowledged. Manuscripts must be clearly marked with the name and address of the contestant and with the group letter (A, B, or C) of the class in which the poem is being entered. Contestants in class B or C must state name of college or school attended. In order to qualify for a prize, the contestant must accompany his submission with a remittance of 25 cents in stamps.

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The Pegasus on the Cover by Eric Gill

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LII

NO. III

JUNE 1938

FIVE POEMS

FARMHANDS' REFRAIN

YOU Repocrat squires in the Farm Bureau,
You Demirep lairds in the Grange,
Your bigness content with the *status quo*
And alarmed at the rumblings of Change,
We'll never go fascist to froth and kill
For assuring the girth of your belts:
Not ours, not ours the farms we till,
We're working for somebody else—

Ranging somebody else's ownsome ground,
Lacking somebody else's thrill,
Haunting somebody else's too profound,
Just a-ghosting, for somebody else!

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We hirelings and sharecroppers here below,
You thanes with your organized Front,
We waking at last with the See-Eye-Oh,
You in dread of an organized brunt,
We'd languish till Gabriel ends it all,
Should we wait till your apathy melts:
Not ours, not ours the creed you bawl,
We're working for somebody else—

Planting somebody else's ownsome Spring,
Reaping somebody else's Fall,
Making somebody else's proudness ring,
Just a-serfing for somebody else!

For you—all these versions of A.A.A.,
More money on top of your means.
For us—yet the paltry six bits a day,
Through winter for bedding and beans.
No matter how far from the Dixon line,
How unAfric the shade of our pelts:
Not ours, not ours your class-combine,
We're working for somebody else—

Milking somebody else's ownsome cow,
Calling somebody else's swine,
Doing somebody else's chores, and how,
Just a-being for somebody else!

H. H. Lewis

Our neighbors in Russia "belong" at least,
No landlord impugning their worth;
Have much consolation of goods increased,
If not the sole havings of earth.
But here against "Liberty's" lines and bars,
What here on the chattelized veldts?
Not ours, not ours the homes and cars,
We're working for somebody else—

Breathing somebody else's ownsome air,
Counting somebody else's stars,
Finding somebody else's god up there
Just a-ghosting for somebody else!

LEST SYMPATHY FUNCTION

In enviable kitchens
With everything so handy
And white
And clean,
They turn a knob, the motor hums, and down
goes an all-inclusiveness that won't clog
the pipes.

So that "the working class should take care
of its own,"
Without garbage-grinders,
Often without plumbing—
On the other side of the railroad tracks.

H. H. Lewis

with the wild hogs, rooting at the site of Commonwealth College, rooting, an ultimate cross-breed of homohogs rooting where once stood the Museum of Social Change.

Oink,
Away back into the future,
Oink,
Drove of these ultra amurkuns feeding also among
the forested ruins of Little Rock—
Oink, oink,
So literally
Getting to the root of the matter.

Safe from Bolshevism,
Lo, one halcyon homohog
Perched overrunningly atop a strange pyramid
and looking down,
Trying to wonder for the moment,
Oi, oi, ok-a-ugh,
What the hell
It's all about
(At a place once called Monte Ne
In a region once known as Arkansas)—
As the jerky micturation flows
Not even with contempt
Down that sealed pyramid containing Harvey's

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records of a civilization which had to be
sacrificed because of one book entitled *Das
Kapital* . . .

FREEDOM, INC.

The capitalists own the preferred stock.
The middleclass, the common stock.
Where do *we* come in?

After six depression years of inalienable
right to seek jobs, how many and what
kind of shares are ours in Freedom,
Incorporated?

Or as a Briton would ask,
More trenchantly—
In Freedom, Limited?

You in particular, Uncle Ned
(Born a chattel slave),
Are you now clipping enough Freedom coupons or
would you and yours prefer the three square
meals per day?

Listen, you farmhands,
You millhands,
You hands unemployed,—
How many of *you* have ever fondled the ticker tape
to see how Freedom is quoted outside Rooshia?

H. H. Lewis

DON'T JUDGE HIM TOO HARSHLY

Johnny Teenling,
One of our *bezprizornie*,
Awoke amid the sardined americanegromexicanfilipino mass
 pounding its ear on the bare floor of a charity mission
 in Los Angeles.

It stank,
It sobbed in slumber, it whined brokenly,
It screamed nightmarishly, awaking . . .
Time for *him* to be up anyway,
He unwedged his boyhood and staggered outside to search
 for a job.

Restaurants open early.
Sometimes yesterday's dishwasher doesn't reappear, allow-
 ing others a chance:
Fifty cents a day and three edible meals.

Those rotten mission sandwiches,
Leftovers causing the fierce gripes,
What *must* be avoided . . .
He never had been strong anyway, Mom wrote, you'll die
 from eating that stuff.

And that mission floor,
Paralyzing shoulder and hip,
Making him hobble along crookedly like some old, old dere-
 lict.

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And *these* mission lice

Of Christianity

Burning his crotch like "dogpush," ow-ow, but he shouldn't
yelp outright, shouldn't break into a run, away up here
on Main Street now, dinging slummy restaurants for a
job, vying with other dingbuzzards, the whole dang
Climate-paradise overswarmed with panicky lousers. . . .

It itchingly twitched,

A cornice fell.

It shuddered loathingly,

Jerrybuildings crumbled ;

Here came a slue of us cot-tobogganing streetward down the
top floor of a scratchhouse whose rear wall alone
remained standing.

More hungry than conscientious,

Glomming on to "the act of God" as distinguished from
those of other grownups,

Johnny entangled himself with a bedsheet and played hurt . . .

Gee for some good grub!

Gee for a bath!

Gee for a boilup!

The siren on the ambulance rushing him to the hospital could
not scream any louder than his logic:

GEE FOR MORE SUCH EARTHQUAKES!

H. H. Lewis

COLLOQUY

Because it is the mind and has its nature,
Because so little of the earth is left it,
It will observe with interest, and accurately,
The coming on of its own end. The fight
Is over; the triumphant earth, too ignorant
To know that it has won, is drinking beer
At Tony's place around the corner. The victim
Studies the balanced ledgers of defeat
And thinks of no more thinking. Clever death
Has done the brain-work, added all the sums,
And snapped the book together.

Well, old mind,

Are you free?

Beyond desire and possibility.

How will you push up earth, then, strengthless one?

My labor's not to push; it is to see,
And I see very well that what is done
Is done, and all the fears flesh felt for me
Are broken like the threads of Lilliput,
Leaving me what I am.

O, speak to me,

And tell me you are sorry for your strife.

Sorry? Oh no. Mine was a merry life.
Pain frightened me
Until my own flesh felt it. Now I see

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That everything I ever feared before
Was hearsay, and each actual pain I bore
Came in the purest spirit of comedy.

E. L. Mayo

THE SINGLE NAME

We see the fruited branch
Follow the branch in flower;
The flower has not fallen
But the fruit is there.

The flower has not fallen
But the name is gone.
Where is the name of the other
In the name of the one?

The seed of the one lying
Quick at the other's core
Forbids the single name
Of fruit or flower.

Yet we must name and name,
For though the name obscures
The whole of which we're part,
The part we name is ours.

Marie DeL. Welch

WORDS TO FIX TIME

APPROACH

I came to them by sea, in the steady wash
of a full tide and a flood of sunlight,
luxurious and silent.
I came where the waters touched gray cliffs,
sharp as the winds they knew, rising
cathedral-like to the fallen tombs
shaded by cypress, walled against the town.
Here as the sky spent gold
on grateful waters, by their sculptured tombs
I watched the tide my fathers loved, and saw
cold gulls meet land birds flying to the sea.

PROGRAM : ARRANGED

Night lights from sky and shore
fleck the oars. The prow dips in the waves.
Across the bay, distantly, windows of
home, faith, civilization, and the many virtues
crowd the landing, reflected in the stream
like stars, dehumanized.

The bay, crossed,
shakes loose, and the image breaks;
the oars as wings recover in the dark

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a heart and voice, that now
the muffled bird may reawake its call
to forest blood, repeating in the night
the words of love and loneliness it knows.

And you, forever absent from this coast, may be
a citizen of lights, on fertile plains
blessed by the donor Venus, naked to her hand:
or, in the world of cities, brow-beat sycophant,
may coin men's hearts with begging in the street.
I cannot envy or condemn or change.
The program is arranged.

Still, the black bay by the wharf invites
rebellion against broods fed in the home-light;
and here, as the frogs croak by the lumber mill,
I sit and court the winds and say your name.

APOCALYPSE

Now from the bursting cataracts, down rock-worn canyons,
rush flood waters, rush boulders ungoverned for the dread fall
down glacier-split mountain passes, rending tree-trunks,
smashing dams, houses, barns, surging on gulfs
immeasurably sundered, as long tremors through
the crumbling caverns tell of temblors, as the earthquake
shakes again the scene unmade, torpedoing the world.
Bring now Job or Prometheus, the good titans of the myths

Stephen Stepanchev

known to us, here on the verge of apocalypse let them feel
a strength neither love nor hate on the unsure earth,
and utter a dark scorn to pitying minds
which give to mountains nerves, to the universe a heart.

HEAR NOW THE GATES

Hear now the gates slowly opening as the night
invades our questioning ears, weaving in the flood
of our fluid dreams the syllables of unuttered hopes.
Evening into evening we pray for wakefulness,
with needs to be paid for patience, love rewarded,
life to receive the broken bread of homage.
But always, always life dissolves; objects become thought;
words to fix time fade; memory quavers asleep
even as hurrying trains hurtle us homeward
with glimpses of the moon, even as forgotten faces
move in the grace of greeting, or retreat in whispers.
Lips, substanceless as words, move without context,
fitfully; fingers weave meaningless gestures, resolve
into the motion of trains, reach into time.
Then it is love, love, we call, as we wade
through deep air, up steep stairs. Love, love:
once more hammer the failing vision into shape.
Form into full coherence table, eye, and mind.
Give us a flowering world, but let it be rock.

Stephen Stepanchev

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TWO POEMS

ECHOES FROM A PRECIPICE

Earth-captive comrades and the sun
Rise weary to the wasted hills.
But thought's night-shadow plies the tongue,
Word-clamor of death-shaping mills.

Outside, the rock and greasewood smoke,
Wave-crackle of a desert brine.
Dust-rattle of the snake and choke
Within, the poisoned minutes twine.

There is no stopping in this brush,
Halfway from peak and harvest plain.
From thorny woods bronze passage crush
To fields in leaf or fruit's steep realm.

Rest not in midpath, carve your crown
On rock a thousand feet in ice;
Plow deep the valley though you drown
In green your labor's precipice.

These withered knolls leaf like the tomb,
From danger's peak alone is view
Of the world you seek, heroic bloom
That summit hedge and doomed hands grow.

Lincoln Fitzell

CHURCH PICNIC

Leaning by a pebble-brook
In a sandy, tangled shade,
Quiet elders doze or look
Placidly across the glade.

For in Sunday talk abreast,
Passing workers gravely hope
That rough laboring is blessed,
And their paths to heaven slope.

After speech a man feels good,
Full of strength to bowl his will,
Or, with loud affection rude,
To rouse warm echoes from the hill.

Freshened by the water's flow,
Daylight cools with summer ease;
Couples in the leafy glow
Carve their names on river trees.

Lincoln Fitzell

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THREE POEMS

LIMITATION

A cup was dismayed to find
With dipping it took
No more away from the ocean
Than out of a brook.

SPIDER AGAINST FLY

Slung in the center of his silken wheel
A hairy lump of feigning drowsiness
Flashes alert at the first desperate tug
Of a winged insect caught and in distress.

Not too hastily does the spider run
But like a boy a-fishing fingers the thread.
He sends an ironic message down the wire:
If you are there, he says, then you are dead.

BIRD IN MY ROOM

Bird in my room, how came you within?
Falcon in sky, mirage of a shelter,
Or ominous sign to accuse and accurse
Me lost in a windowless room of the world.

Walter Hendricks

Quick, find the way out the way in you came.
Take your wild beating of wings from my heart,
Convulsive connotations out of my brain,
Of a far-seeking bird that I too once was.

Walter Hendricks

TRANSLATIONS

How does a child learn all our ways of speech?
Perhaps as one foresees when skies are gray
The lines of coming rain—things time can teach
And quiet-changing life lived day by day.
How does one learn the subtler ways of love—
Such love as lasts through all one's life? Who knows?
And taking thought will never tell whereof
That flower of the range of living grows,
Nor black December tell, nor green-leaved May,
Only still-changing life lived day by day.
Perhaps, breathed with one's breath, as love and speech
Down our clear mystery in time's deep air
Are learned without one's knowledge, so for each
Death too will come upon us unaware.

Edith Franklin Wyatt

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TWO SONNETS FROM *MIRRORS OF VENUS*

KIN

Indigo and Zodiac with tangent bubbles
to bubbles separate these cherished
arduously discovered you's and me's
who smell of resembled smells no longer
in sleepless nostrils; though, like the space-caressing
legs of a compass, the smile of pride
(circular, self-confined, centrifugal, from inside out)
configure immortal me's and you's.

Tenderly ruptured pride alone
builds up barricades of communion
where in many-eyed, unblinking stares
before the milkman clinks his jars
tangent or separate foams of you's and me's collapse and fuse
from outside in; one sapphire and yet conscious spiral.

LINK

Had you not died, our friendship might be dead
for the world it was born to died in war
and may drag on only in avatar;
yet how I wish you lived, and that instead
of you, all our affection had been laid
away and, holding memory's lens, we saw

John Wheelwright

friendship's morphology in perfect law
who reckoned when our friendship might be dead.

Not only I were livelier had you lived
work-mate to lay a morbid culture's ghost ;
but you yourself embalmed, beatified
in friendship's reliquary, and I shrived
in love's confessional, where love is lost
as our love would be lost, had you not died.

John Wheelwright

THE MATE

This cowardly woman, afraid of a man,
Any man, fled wild as a wood in a storm,
Fled over a tundra where nothing can
Be vibrant with life and warm.

She fled, and with her the terror went,
Streamed closely as hair on her head ;
The terrible grasp, the passion spent,
The lust of a body uncomforted.

The dream, nothing human, more strong and male
Than man who is fashioned of woman's flesh,
Pursued her through Danaic showers of hail,
And broke her and brought her back on a leash.

Keith Thomas

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GONE TO SUMMER

To be a thing that grows in air
Where wings of insects whirl and pass
And know not whether I am there
Or but a blowing in the grass;

Within the shadow of the hill
To lie so still, as root or stone,
That meadow mouse and daffodil
Surprise no flicker but their own;

So stone or green, so sifted slight,
I might be drifted on my way,
Unseen, as common to the sight;
A spar upon the wave of day;

A nearness like the night, so thinned
No bird would think to turn a feather;
And be, as lightly as the wind,
An eye in the wide weather.

Lloyd Frankenberg

THE WEATHER OF THE DAWN

SHADOW

It was the shadow of the deer on the moon-hard slope
that you saw: not death: but death was there
with the breaking twig, in the dark; with the sounds that
groped
through the blind wood; with the step sourceless as air,
and running. Though death was there

it was not this you saw but a shadow—
fox-fire glistened, perhaps, in the rotten log.
But death was there in the cold blue-porcelain meadow;
it flew with the bat, it crept with the fog,
it was there in the brush, crouching behind the log.

It was a shadow you saw, for death is the thing not seen,
no never
in sun or moon; it is a faceless thing, it has no breath.
Construe this how you will. Run, run forever
from what you saw; but you saw. It was not death.

THE SHAPE OF MOUNTAINS

Let sleep the swallow on the wheel
Of turning night, that moves to death;
She stands below who would not feel
The burden of his breath—

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Who would not have a source for slow
Winds that arise and then are gone;
Who knows the night, and would not know
The weather of the dawn.

Now moonlight shadows in the pines
And eats like acid through the fern,
And builds with blocks and spider lines
A world she need not learn:

Where she must stand with no escape
And see her world coldly increased;
And see the expense of night; the shape
Of mountains on the east.

WE WALK IN WATER

This night has seen a thousand nights go down
The closed circle of earth; this night lying
Tangent to water has seen the dim moon drown
Against its image. And now when moonlight dying
Fades to a watery gray along the east,
The spider walks uncertain on the snare
That he has threaded, finding not the least
Unbarricaded passage anywhere.

We walk in water all these early hours
Uncertain as the spider through his town,

Edward Weismiller

Almost unsure of these strange, weighted flowers:
Almost unknowing that always the night goes down
Its closed arc, and that day must surely be heard
On the last bough east, from the numbed throat of a bird.

Edward Weismiller

GARDENER

Sifting and sowing myriad things
Like sand, like nuggets, furred, with wings,
His knobbed and loamy fingers hold
The flowery destinies of mold.
His light is from a lesser god
Who guides the deft spade under sod,
Slants his wit weatherward, to mind
If rains hang near or moons be kind,
And quickens in him blood that warms
Toward glowing mass and spriggy forms.
What boon in culling, for his creed,
A more Olympian stuff from seed,
Though universes, shelled in calm,
Toss turbulently on his palm,
And even creation must be mute
Until he give it leave to root?

Lori Petri

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STRANGE WORLD

I think upon a time when men are happy
and their strange words, strange thoughts, strange faces.

They ask of me from their distant world:
Why do you shed tears?
What sad, tormented faces!

And I reply:
perhaps you will remember.
We warred for bread and destroyed the crop in the
wheatfield.
We fed the hungry babe with the nipples of bombs,
The word of peace was sweet on our tongues
and we warred for it.
We warred for love, and winning, won hatred.
Wars of the sword, wars of the word, wars of the heart,
the scars of war are deep and embitter our faces.
Our world lies torn and bleeding.

Remember us!
We scattered armies and triumphed that you might live.

They smile, they raise their eyebrows gently,
they do not understand, and they pity us
with their strange, happy faces.

S. Funaroff

TWO POEMS

SIGEL XV

So if you love me,
love me everywhere,
blind to all argument
or phantasy
claim the one signet;

truly in the sky
God marked me to be his,
scrawled on me "I, I, I
alone can comprehend

this subtlety:
a song is very simple
or is bound
with inter-woven complicated sound;

one undertakes
the song's integrity,
another all the filament
wound round

chord and discord,
the quarter note and whole

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run of iambic
or of coryiam:

no one can grasp,"
(God wrote)
"nor understand
the two, insolvent,
only he and you;"

shall we two witness
that his writ is wise
or shall we rise,

wing-tip to purple wing,
create new earth,
new skies?

FROM EPISODE I

Callypso

O you clouds,
here is my song;
man is clumsy and evil
a devil.

O you sand,
this is my command,

H. D.

drown all men in slow breathless suffocation—
then they may understand

O you winds,
beat his sails flat,
shift a wave sideways
that he suffocate.

O you waves
run counter to his oars,
waft him to blistering shores,
where he may die of thirst

O you skies,
send rain
to wash salt from my eyes,

and witness all earth and heaven,
it was of my heart-blood
his sails were woven;

witness, river and sea and land;
you, you must hear me—
man is a devil,
man will not understand.

Odysseus (on the sea)

She gave me fresh water in an earth jar,
strange fruits

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to quench thirst,
a golden zither
to work magic on the water;

she gave me wine in a cup
and white wine in a crystal shell;
she gave me water and salt,
wrapped in a palm leaf
and palm-dates:

she gave me wool and a pelt of fur,
she gave me a pelt of silver-fox,
and a brown soft skin of a bear,

she gave me a comb for my hair,
she washed brine and mud from my body,
and cool hands
held balm
for a rust-wound on my ankle;

she gave me water
and fruit in a basket,
and shallow
baskets of pulse and grain, and a ball
of hemp
for mending the sail—

H. D.

she gave me a willow basket
for letting into the shallows
for eels;

she gave me peace in her cave.

Callypso (from land)

He has gone,
he has forgotten;
he took my lute and my shell of crystal—
he never looked back—

Odysseus (on the sea)

She gave me a wooden flute
and a mantle,
she wove me this wool—

Callypso (from land)

for man is a brute and a fool.

H. D.

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THE MUSE AND EDMUND WILSON

EVER since Plato barred poets from his ideal republic the art of verse and its right to a place among man's intellectual pursuits have been called into question. Each age has had its critic who attempted to show that poetry was without standing or value—an art grown obsolete, unedifying and unprofitable. The most recent critic to assail the art and to discourage its practice is Mr. Edmund Wilson, who at fairly regular intervals and to the accompaniment of a flashing of signs and rumbling of clouds in the literary heavens, steps forth from the sibyl's cave to pronounce his awful doom. Mr. Wilson, as he himself reminds us, has been uttering this curse for some years now. Just when he experienced his first seizure I do not know, but he has had his sign out since at least 1934, at which time he predicted dire things for the Muse in an article, *The Canons of Poetry*, published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. More recently—particularly in reviews published in *The New Republic*—he has reiterated his warnings. With each such utterance the clouds grow blacker, the predictions more dire. The past few months have witnessed a lull in Mr. Wilson's activities as a prophet but, apparently, no loss of confidence in his gifts; he has thought well enough of the articles and reviews containing these revelations to piece them together in an essay which is included in his latest book.¹ Let it not

¹*The Triple Thinkers*, by Edmund Wilson. Harcourt, Brace.

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be thought from the title—*Is Verse a Dying Technique?*—that Mr. Wilson has begun to harbor any doubts about the matter. His answer is, as always, a resounding *Yes*. According to him the death-rattle can be heard in nearly every line of present-day verse. Its beat is so faint, so unsteady, that it “might almost as well be abandoned altogether.” Mr. Wilson is not one to shun the facts. “I am not complaining about this state of affairs,” he continues, keeping a stiff upper lip. “I know that it is all on the cards.”

Had he been content to make his prediction and then be done, Mr. Wilson might have succeeded in convincing us. Unfortunately he has not known when to let well enough alone. He has felt a need to back up his prophecy with a thesis about the relation of verse to prose, which has necessitated a definition of terms and a citation of specific examples. And it is here that he gives his hand away.

What truth there is in his thesis is so evident and everywhere recognized that we may cheerfully make him a present of it. It is undeniable, for example, “that the technique of verse was once commonly used for many purposes for which we now ordinarily use prose.” But to conclude from this, as Mr. Wilson does, that the techniques of verse and prose are interchangeable is to draw a wholly unwarranted inference. Equally unwarranted is his contention that the modern novelist has taken over the functions formerly performed by poets and is thus the real inheritor of the poetic tradition.

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"One realizes," he writes, "that though Dante is greater than Flaubert, Flaubert is a writer of the same class." With that statement the flood gates are opened. Your definition of poetry is now sufficiently elastic to let anything slip through, even Mr. Wilson's thesis. Indeed, it is on the kind of confusion expressed in the sentence just quoted that the thesis is based. "Is Flaubert any less intense and precise in his use of words and rhythms than Virgil?" he asks. "Put Virgil's descriptions beside Flaubert's: the angry bees of Virgil with the bees in *Madame Bovary* that hit against the window; Virgil's old market gardener with Flaubert's old farm servant at the fair. . ." The analogy is ingenious, but beyond revealing its author's confusion, it proves little. To suggest that Flaubert is no less intense and precise in his use of words and rhythms than Virgil, is to say no more than that Flaubert was a master of his medium, as Virgil was of his. The difference is obviously one of kind, not degree.

Both the novelist and the poet construct verbal objects. But the novelist needs a much greater number of words to construct his object; these words, while they combine to form that object, are ultimately subordinate to it in the sense that the various characters, scenes or incidents which are thereby created exist independently of their specific verbal context. The words employed by the novelist can be altered to a degree or other words substituted for them without destroying the novel's pattern or character. This is not the case with poetry. The object which is a poem

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is inseparable from the specific words and the specific order the poet has given the words.

One or two illustrations will perhaps clarify and enforce my point. As regards poetry we have but to consider paraphrase and translation. To make a successful prose paraphrase of a poem is an impossibility. Translation is seldom more successful—witness the very few translations of any consequence. The best are those where the translator, almost always himself a talented poet, has not translated so much as created a new poem. A classic example is Chapman's Homer, which remains an excellent English poem but is hardly a satisfactory translation of Homer. A novel, on the other hand, can be translated or transposed to another medium without losing its essential identity. Its *donnée* can be successfully incorporated even in a medium as different as the cinema. The original dialogue can be scrapped and the same results gained with new dialogue. But in filming Shakespeare the original speeches must be kept intact. No movie camera can reproduce the effects that Shakespeare got by using the technique of verse—and that is not only because Shakespeare is so great a poet. A lesser poet would present similar difficulties. As soon as the medium is altered, the poetry, being intextricably bound up with the medium, is destroyed.

I have not discussed the particular passages from Virgil and Flaubert that Mr. Wilson cites. In making any such comparison of a poet and a prose writer one must consider the respective works in their entirety. It is critically meaning-

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less to compare isolated passages or paragraphs of a poem and a novel. The few instances where prose approximates the effects of poetry—certain passages by Joyce are probably the best examples—cannot be said to be representative of the method employed in the novel as a whole. In verse, however, the method whereby such effects are created is employed consistently, is the governing principle of composition. The governing principle of prose is of another kind altogether. This holds true despite the fact that there is always a certain amount of interchange between the two techniques. Prose writers have found ways of turning certain devices of verse to their own purposes, just as poets have adapted certain devices and phrasings of prose. In both instances the adaptation is the important factor.

These facts would seem to leave little basis for Mr. Wilson's assertion that verse and prose are "simply two different techniques of literary expression"—or, to give "simply" the value it has in this context, that they are different techniques for *saying the same things*. What Mr. Wilson is doing here is setting up the old dichotomy, long since discredited, between form and content. This, from someone as familiar with Marxist thought as Edmund Wilson professes to be,¹ is somewhat startling, for it represents an out-and-out rejection of Marx's basic concept of dialectical

¹I say "professes to be," because Mr. Wilson's article on *Marxism and Literature* in his new book reveals such a thorough misunderstanding of its subject that to call its author a "Marxist" is to render the term meaningless.

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interaction. Yet what better reveals the interaction of thought and matter than poetry, which constantly combines and integrates elements commonly thought of as opposites, thereby bodying forth their hidden relationships and giving them a habitation and a name? Poetry, in fact, is a kind of dialectical shorthand and its essence is metaphor, "the swift perception of relations." Its form springs from and is integral to its vision. This intimate relation of form and vision Mr. Wilson does not acknowledge. Hence his mistaken conviction that the two techniques are merely literary conventions, his belief that the epic poets of the past and certain modern novelists are writers of the same class, and his groundless generalization concerning the victory of prose over verse as a mode of literary expression. Prose may quite possibly be ousting verse from the scene, but if so it is not because it can achieve the same ends as verse, can, in other words, be poetry.

Flimsy as Mr. Wilson's thesis turns out to be upon examination, it is further undermined by the unfortunate examples he cites to bear it out. To confuse the aims, functions and methods of verse and prose is bad enough, but it is little short of ludicrous to offer as "the most striking confirmation of the obsolescence of verse technique"—Maxwell Anderson. Mr. Wilson admits that Anderson's verse is bad but tells us it is bad because Anderson has chosen a medium that is moribund and obsolete. Now I should have thought nothing could be plainer than that Anderson and not the technique of verse is at fault. Surely it is obvious that Anderson conceives his

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material as a prose writer, not a poet, does. In attempting to express that conception in verse he is simply using a technique unsuited to his purposes and the result is what we should expect it to be. Reasons of space forbid a discussion of each of Mr. Wilson's other examples. We may wonder, though, at the eclecticism which lumps Yeats, Eliot and Auden together with John Masefield, Ogden Nash and F.P.A. What the first group has in common with the second, especially in the matter of verse technique, since that is the ground on which they are brought together, is as hard to understand as what led the author of *Axel's Castle* to proclaim Edna Millay "one of the sole surviving masters of English verse." While agreeing that to be one of the one and only, no matter what, is at least to triumph over logic and grammar, we may ask how anyone whose chief objection to verse as a technique is that it no longer bears any relation to modern life, can possibly think that Miss Millay was *ever* a master? What could be more removed from the realities, tempo and language of our time than Miss Millay's "old imperial line," the passing of which Mr. Wilson so deeply regrets? Is it not his preference for this "old imperial line" which causes him unconsciously to identify its obsolescence with that of verse technique in general?

Actually, of course, the technique of verse is far from obsolescent. Nor are its tempo and idiom removed from those of contemporary life. Mr. Wilson, in maintaining the contrary, constantly contradicts himself. First he objects to present-day verse technique because he says its language and

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rhythms bear no relation to modern life. Then when he finds poets (Eliot, Auden, MacNeice, et al.) whose language and rhythms belie his objections, he reproaches them for having abandoned the "old imperial line." To complete the confusion, he advocates a return to a kind of poetic diction that was already dead in our grandfathers' day—the kind of poetic diction employed by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, William Morris, and James Russell Lowell. It was Gerard Manley Hopkins who first exposed its defects in his letter to Canon Dixon, dated 1 Dec. 1881. "To waive every other objection," he wrote, "it is essentially archaic, biblical a good deal, and so on: now that is a thing that can never last; a perfect style must be of its age." The decline of this convention is traced in detail in this letter; we need not rehearse the facts here; Mr. Wilson can turn to Hopkins' letter. The tradition of poetic diction which Hopkins himself did so much to revive and reinvigorate is the one into which the significant verse of our own time fits. Its chief characteristics are precision of phrase, an extension of the functions and subject matter of verse to include images from contemporary life and the rhythms of everyday speech, as opposed to the vagueness and otherworldliness of the late-romantic diction and imagery. Not only Eliot, Pound, Williams, Miss Moore, and Auden, but Hardy, Lawrence, Yeats, and Wilfrid Owen belong to this living tradition. Is Mr. Wilson prepared to assert that this tradition exemplifies the "obsolescence of verse technique"?

Any generalization concerning the nature or quality of literary production during a given period must be based on the

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best work of that period, not on its second or third-rate efforts. But even then you will not uncover anything very illuminating if you isolate the way of saying from the thing said, if you reduce a poem or novel to a matter of technique, which is what Mr. Wilson has done. Such an approach is unprofitable because shallow and one-sided, and it is likely to result in a confused and fallacious view of the functions of both verse and prose. If the achievements and limitations of modern verse are to be intelligently evaluated and an examination made of poetry's present status as compared with that of prose, a less superficial approach to the subject will have to be made. Mr. Wilson might have considered, for example, why it is that, despite their technical perfection and virtuosity, our poets for the most part lack the scope, the depth of insight and inevitability of image and phrase which the great poets of the past commanded. Consideration of this and similar questions would have been a fertile and valuable work. Mr. Wilson, instead, has spent his time trying to prove a thesis which both the examples he cites and the more representative ones that he ignores, refute. For critical inquiry and judgment he has substituted the easier labors of irresponsible prophecy.

T. C. Wilson

REVIEWS

MEANING AND BEING

Land of the Free, by Archibald MacLeish. Harcourt, Brace.

A LITTLE more than ten years ago, Mr. MacLeish was writing a brief *Ars Poetica* which concluded:

A poem should not mean
But be

Later he addressed an *Invocation to the Social Muse*, who seems to be of Russian origin, observing:

I remind you Barinya the life of the poet is hard—
A hardy life with a boot quick as a fiver:
Is it just to demand of us also to bear arms?

But times change, and we with time, and the artist who insisted on the intrinsic value of his art and on his need for privacy in which to perfect it, was diverted by the noises of a panic-stricken crowd below him. He began to hear, louder than the silence in which he watched a moving shadow, louder than the sword cracking the shell of a cockatrice, louder than the jays in the apple-trees, the clamorous voice of the city. He felt the desire not merely to communicate experience, but to secure the response of a more comprehensive audience. The quondam pupil of Pound, the seeker after the exact word and the precise cadence, came to share Masfield's feeling that "the art, which appeals only to a limited section of the world, can be but a limited and faulty art." Mr. MacLeish does not employ the facile vulgar style that has a wide

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popular appeal, but he is obviously making an effort, however awkwardly, at public speaking. And, as though he were conscious of the crowd's scorn of the poet, eager to justify himself, and ready to humble himself utterly in order to be heard at all, in his latest volume he has contented himself with verse that is no more than a running commentary on a series of photographs, which speak quite eloquently for themselves.

Land of the Free is primarily a picture-book. It consists of nearly ninety photographs, most of them taken for the Farm Security Administration, together with some others snapped for such organizations as the National Child Labor Committee, the U. S. Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service, the TVA, and various picture magazines. Dorothea Lange is the photographer whose work is represented most amply, but she shares the honors with fifteen other photographers whose aim has been to present a pictorial document of American life under the stress of drought and flood—a study of men, women, and children, driven, hemmed in, and beaten down by the greed of the great industrialists and plantation owners, the powerful exploiters of land and labor. Sharecroppers, dispossessed homesteaders, flood refugees, lumbermen, cotton pickers, cannery workers, lean men with sun-wrinkled eyes, toilworn women borne down by babies, child laborers with drawn empty faces, these are shown against the background of a land wasted by erosion, exhausted acreage farmed for profit rather than for use, bleakly garish Main Streets, roads fenced with barbed wire, abandoned towns,

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mills, that like the cemeteries in their backyards, are dedicated to death. The pictures are not monotonous, partly because portraits alternate with landscapes, and partly because they are so arranged as to suggest a not unhopeful epic. The first picture is of Arkansas sharecroppers; the tenth shows police driving strikers from the Republic Steel Co. plant in South Chicago last May; the eleventh, a union organizer being beaten up at the gates of the Ford Motor Co.; the fiftieth, a farm boy in an Oklahoma dust-storm; the eighty-fifth, a May Day demonstration in Philadelphia; the eighty-sixth, labor leaders addressing textile workers in North Carolina; the eighty-seventh, the celebration of the end of a steel strike in Pennsylvania; and the last a Dust Bowl farmer who has migrated to California in the hope of a new start. The implication is clear, even without the titles, which are given in an index at the back of the book, and certainly without Mr. MacLeish's verse commentary, which begins: "We don't know," goes on to wonder about "the great American dream," to ask

if there's liberty a man can mean that's
Men: not land

and concludes:

We wonder
We don't know
We're asking

The photographs contribute enormously to the text. The text does not illuminate, does not, as the poet sought to have it do, "illustrate" the photographs. It is the peculiarity of

familiar grammar but by a succession of images. More recently it has occurred to some poets that contemporary effect may be gained by parsimony in the use of finite verbs. Mr. Gregory, for instance, has overworked this "cinematic" effect so heavy with unsinewed participles and substantives, and so passive in quality. Holden has wisely clung to the tonic of a common syntax, having a talent for making it do heavy work, and having an active mood that much of the more revolutionary poetry needs badly. The concentration that results nets a simplicity that often pays him well for the trouble. Its danger is that it predisposes him toward an imagery and a subject matter that sometimes makes his simplicity less valid than it seems on first reading.

Holden is a later New Englander, interested in himself, in the loyalty of a few other people to common and rigorous values, and in a nature from which he feels an ancient separation and can only meet with stoicism. He is one of the genuine New Englanders, speaking in the true tone. Yet it is unfortunate that in some of the poems the warm and simple pictures by which he acknowledges a more sensual heart than Frost's or Robinson's, seem doubtful. It is a double misfortune in Holden's case that his feeling is blurred sometimes by an effect too pretentiously stark.

Yet part of the time Holden is not truly simple, but only reaching for it and only attaining the mannerism. This failure is felt, for example, in *When Linden Boughs Are Bare*, where a resolution is distributed through images that are associated but hardly inevitable. It is more transparent in

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Rabbit and Hawk, where excessive care is taken to form a not very pointed question and to compact an unexciting answer. Speaking of a society that is going to the dogs, he says:

We too break down the small
And are broken by the high.
Rabbit and hawk in one,
We scatter and we fly.

What man would have it changed—
None furious, none oppressed;
The hawk's breast giving down
To line the rabbit's nest?

The courage and the stoicism are admirable, as are their statement. But it is clear that few "thinking" men ponder changes which would make the world free of all the furious and all the oppressed. Some are born masters and some slaves, yet there are desirable changes in our society which these men do think about and do demand. Holden's stanzas suggest that their cogitations have been examined and found sentimental. Actually, no very clear view has been taken at all. If a society's change can be sung, then a real question must be asked and a really pressing solution, no matter how personal it is, must be made. Holden, in a fatalism that seems to miss the real demand of the times, seems to postpone all collective effort as useless.

Yeats has been mentioned, but Holden has a capacity of his own for the reduced image and simple construction. The last lines of *On Turning Over a Stone* are sufficient proof.

Natural History

We turn no stones today
Unless they bar our way.
Now, like the worm, the eye,
Accustomed to its lie,
Swears to the cheated brain
That other worlds are pain
And this alone complete,
Sweet or not sweet.

Geese in the Running Water and *Cold Night* are equally successful in their concord of thought and sound. The sonnets are best where they are most metaphysical; yet in spite of their impersonal manner, they remain rather private. They are least successful when Holden's simplicity muddies into the banal or the clumsy:

When all is said and done, it comes to this:
One quickening difference alone divides
The living from the dead, the flesh of brides
From the like-postured bodies that stones kiss

His fondness for the short line is hard to explain, too, for most of his best poems use a longer one, muted, subtle, and restrained.

Holden possesses an integrity and reason which the sociological poets, among others, need very much. It is a rank error that he is not more widely recognized than he is, especially when there is such a serious celebration of poets who fake the sense and sensibility which he truly possesses.

Reuel Denney

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ALDINGTON 1938

The Crystal World, by Richard Aldington. Doubleday, Doran & Co.

In our time, when major poets are rare, almost extinct, competition for place in the first line of minor poets is so keen that several very worthy figures, through unhappy circumstances, are buried deep in the ranks—among them, Richard Aldington.

His prime misfortune was his association with Imagism, or rather our association of him with Imagism. The movement was temporarily beneficial to him, and he casually forsook it when it ceased being so. Yet when Imagism slipped its moorings and drifted far from popular favor, most of us overlooked that he wasn't still aboard. His being linked with the British war poets also reacted against him. As their vogue passed, we stopped reading his flashing *Images of War*, though it remains, in company with Wilfred Owen's and Herbert Read's work, the most powerful verse occasioned by the war.

The middle 'twenties found him at the crest of his career, yet winning little of the praise he deserved. *Exile* and *A Fool in the Forest* did not obey the Eliotic canon which decreed that poetic emotion be de-personalized. In 1928, and again in 1934, he published collected editions of his poems, which stirred the critics to sum up his deficiencies. Mostly he was damned for lacking the technical finish of Eliot. It was assumed that he was without "either the genius or the arduous will for persistent execution." No one honored his apparent

conviction that formal control is less essential to poetry than the spurt and flare of imagination. Note his remarks on a fellow-poet who believed the same thing: "Lawrence is a great literary artist. By this I don't mean that he was a painful planner and polisher—an artist in the sense that Flaubert and Pope were artists. I mean that he was greatly gifted as an artist, if only because he possessed a most delicate and passionate sensibility. His art was an art of spontaneity, fresh quick-flowing creativeness." Aldington needs to be judged along with such impulsive poets as Lawrence, Emerson, and Shelley, whose success is intermittent, but who can be read with as much pleasure as the more disciplined, uniform poets.

Nearly as common is the charge that Aldington has relied on too few themes and rehearsed them too ploddingly. True enough, he has dealt almost exclusively with the radiance of immediate love and of love in the memory, with the hideousness of immediate battle and of battle in the memory, and with the suppression suffered by imagination at the hands of materialistic civilization. But at least he has searched them deeply, sometimes in unforgettable language; furthermore, his approach to them and his tone have been remarkably varied.

Regrettably, my contention that Aldington is a better poet than his current reputation would indicate must be flanked by the admission that he is a better poet than his newest volume would indicate. *The Crystal World* is a lyric-sequence about a man and a woman and the near-destruction of the happiness

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they find together. It is distinguished from similar sequences, like Meredith's *Modern Love*, Lawrence's *Look! We Have Come Through!*, and MacLeish's *The Woman on the Stair*, in that the menace does not issue from the lovers' own temperaments, and is not even defined as the poem progresses. Indeed, a more self-sufficient and apparently indestructible union has never been pictured, even in poetry, and the rest of the world is invited to go hang itself in traditional Donneque manner:

O world of strange and violent men,
Let us have our world!

It is a world which has no battlefield,
No factions and no bitter strife for power,
And scarcely touches yours.

But unexpectedly and inexplicably the lover is singing passionate regrets at his mistress's departure. Then, just as inexplicably, she is restored to him, and his ecstasy comes back to life, though somewhat mellower and more reasoning than before.

That is all. An episode as old as poetry itself. Intensely personal lyrics, which do not seem personal because of their utter commonplaceness. Whatever point or novelty the series of lyrics may possess is provided by a long, prosaic retelling of the story in an epilogue. Wrapped up in numerous random reflections on life and art, the secret of the lovers' separation and reunion is quizzically related by the author, with purposeful flatness:

You have here two passionate natures
 Unable to compromise
 Under the snug winking of the hypocrite world.
 They must have everything,
 Must share each day and night,
 Must grow together closer, closer,
 And build their 'crystal world.'

But there are obstacles, there always are
(No need to quote from Shakespeare.)
Never mind what obstacles, but say
‘The Bishops and the Bench would not approve,
Nor would the T.U.C., nor Mrs. Grundy,
Nor Mr. Grundy putting on the green.’

So, since the world's whispers and butting in cannot be barred, they determine to part. But she can endure the separation no better than he, and sends him a Western Union cable to re-join her. The moral, as every reader must now know, is that a crystal world is never simply given—

you must make it.
Only from the purity of extreme passion,
And, alas, the purity of extreme pain,
Can you build the crystal world.

The whole performance is as naïvely conceived and expressed as this condensation suggests. The lyrics give us emotion unrefined, untransfused. In the past, Aldington has from time to time shown a bent for cloying lushness, but has checked himself; as Yeats said in another connection, a mile further and all had been marsh. But now he rides desperately through the quagmire, spreading clichés before him to make the path look solidier. The occasional stretches of firm ground, with a flowering beauty reminiscent of his best pieces in *Exile* and *Images of Desire*, are unable to compensate for the

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rest. The dry, expansive poetic essay at the end is ineffective by itself. Could it have been broken up and intermixed with the lyrics—one offsetting the other as in *Don Juan* or *A Fool i' the Forest*—something somewhat better than what we have might have resulted.

Whether any of the failure of Aldington's new poem can be blamed on his increasing preoccupation with novels and sketches and articles, one cannot say. He has spoken of Lawrence's suffering "from the usual fate of polygraphs—people are too lazy-minded to include a large varied mass of creative writing." Yet half the fault may be the polygraph's, if his simultaneous harvest of several fields is so rapid that none is thoroughly gleaned. Certainly Aldington's last novel, *Very Heaven*, and his last essays, *Artifex*, also betray a lack of concentration and of self-criticism, which subtracts a good deal from their potential excellence.

Kerker Quinn

A NOTABLE VERSE PLAY

Robin Landing, by Stanley Young. Farrar & Rinehart.

If the function of verse in play writing is to effect a heightened coordination between mood and action, to intensify character-impact through sensory image and well-defined metric stress, the choice of medium for *Robin Landing* is justified. The play's setting is of unusual interest: an eighteenth-century trading-post in the Kentucky wilderness. Grant Eaton has fled Massachusetts to make a new life for

A Notable Verse Play

himself, following the treachery of his brother Kane and the unfaithfulness of his young wife Linda. But they arrive at Robin Landing eighteen years later to claim Grant's land, believing him dead. Grant's bitter desire for revenge leads only to tragedy: first for David, his sixteen-year-old half-breed son; then for himself, when Kane once more outwits him. The hand of retribution strikes Kane down, however; and Grant and Linda are finally reunited.

That necessary ingredient of dramatic tragedy—emotional tension in the conflict between two strongly matched characters—is implicit in the theme and skillfully set up in Act One. But the tension breaks too soon; some of the scenes fail in realistic conviction; the few humorous touches in the play are clumsily handled; and an over-stressed foreshadowing of events, like that of the coming fate of Kane, lessen sustained interest.

Because Mr. Young commendably avoids the orthodox formality of blank verse, his free and subtly varied form is unusually well adapted to character and action. Conventional blank verse is an illogical choice in that it does not fit the pace of contemporary life, nor match the rhythm and texture of modern speech. Mr. Young's work has a strongly marked rhythmical beat that admirably catches the accent of American frontier speech. The diction is rough, exact, indigenously flavored. In many places—as in the scene between Linda and David—the dialogue has an impassioned lyric beauty. It seems to me a technical weakness, however, that the character Laban, an idiot frontier waif, is made to carry most of

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the lyric burden. His song as the opening of the play, with its refrain

O where will I go?
O where come to rest
With this bird in my heart
With this wind in my breast

is poignantly effective. But few modern dramatists are successful in following the Shakespearean pattern of introducing some simple-minded "child of nature" as either comic or lyric relief. Maxwell Anderson's signal failure in such attempts comes to mind. Since Laban, however, plays a major role essential to the play's action, his function as a lyric instrument is given more credence. In both lyric and dramatic passages, Mr. Young's writing is on the whole flexible and facile, vigorous but not ornate, and—notably enough—allways distinguishable as verse.

Ruth Lechlitner

NEWS NOTES

As this issue goes to press we are glad to learn that the Pulitzer Prize for poetry has been awarded to Marya Zaturenska (Mrs. Horace Gregory), of Bronxville, N. Y., in recognition of her latest book, *Cold Morning Sky*. This award is a well-deserved honor to a poet who has been doing consistently fine work since her first appearance in *POETRY* in 1920. The prize-winning volume was reviewed in our February issue by Marshall Schacht, who said: "Her criterion of what to use has been 'pure poetry'. . . . She seeks the mellifluous line with restraint, and achieves her poetic release with striking success, conscious always of what she is doing, knowing it is dangerous and unfashionable and temporary. From the squawk of cities and the gnawing of the modern mind, she escapes to asylum and takes the

veil." In a year which saw the publication of outstanding books by such non-Pulitzer poets as Wallace Stevens, Allen Tate, Louise Bogan, Robinson Jeffers, and others, one can imagine the difficulty of choice; it is thus particularly fortunate that there happened to be a book of real merit on which the judges could agree.

Miss Zaturenska was born in Moscow in 1901 and brought to this country at the age of ten. At fourteen, after a few years in grammar school, she began work in a factory. Her introduction to modern poetry was through a copy of the Monroe-Henderson anthology, which she read in a public library. She has received two awards from POETRY: the John Reed Memorial Prize in 1924, and the Guarantors Prize in 1936.

Through the prolonged efforts of Tessa Sweazy Webb, a bill has recently been enacted in the Ohio legislature setting apart the third Friday in each October as Ohio Poetry Day, to honor and give recognition to poets of the state, and to be the occasion for special study of poetry in the public schools. Taking her text from the Whitman quotation on our inside cover, Mrs. Webb writes: "How are we to create these 'great audiences'? In the first place we know that the audience must be interested in the thing put before it. Here in my own state I thought of one way that might eventually become effectual in creating deeper appreciation of poetry and thereby greater audiences: securing legislation that requires special observance of poetry in the public schools on a day when the state officially honors its poets. I believe Ohio is the first and only state that has such legislation." We heartily congratulate Ohio and Mrs. Webb.

The following protest has been sent to us by William FitzGerald, of Boston, from whose article in *The Examiner* we quoted briefly in our April issue: "The magazine is not, as you stated, 'fascist' propaganda; what it sets out to achieve, successfully I think, is a sounder evaluation of present-day ideologies. . . . Democracy must rid itself of a nostalgia conducive to its fatal disintegration by greedy and self-seeking political factions; it must make up for lost time, for the irresponsibility of decades, if it is to survive the encroachments of absolutist doctrines—if, that is, it is to retain any semblance of identification with the social principles formulated by Jefferson. In this task of rejuvenating its resources it can expect no real aid from the Left, since Democracy's death struggle is Communism's bid for power. . . . *The Examiner*, to my knowledge, advocates no seizure of power by storm troopers and associated riff-raff; it confines itself to critical explosion of the Marxist myth." We

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are glad to print this statement from a gifted young writer and contributor to POETRY; however, we find it hard to understand Mr. Fitzgerald's objection to our remarks about *The Examiner*. We find it especially hard in view of the second issue of that quarterly, which is a long and undisguised paean to the fascist ideal.

A determined search of this year's long list of Guggenheim Fellowships reveals three appointments for creative writing in poetry: to Rolfe Humphries and Oscar Brynes, of New York, and to C. F. MacIntyre, of Los Angeles. Mr. Humphries is well known to our readers, his last two appearances having been in November and March. Reviewing *And Spain Sings* in the April issue, Theodore Roethke called Humphries "one of the best but least recognized of contemporary poets." Mr. Brynes first appeared in POETRY three years ago. His recent book-length narrative poem, *The Day's Work*, will be reviewed next month by S. Funaroff. Mr. MacIntyre, whose group in the February issue aroused much interest, is the author of a remarkable first volume, *Poems*, published by Macmillan in 1936.

The Phoenix, a new quarterly edited by J. P. Cooney and dedicated to the memory of D. H. Lawrence, has arisen at Woodstock, N. Y. "to form a covenant between all men and women, now far scattered and isolated from one another, who are seeking to roll away the stone from the tomb of modern society." The first issue features an essay by Lawrence, entitled *Pan in America*, which contains passages worthy of the author's genius. The other contributors, though lacking Lawrence's poetic gift, do their best to live up to the advance notices, which promise "intimations of and clues to a renaissance, joyous deliverance from the blight of Christianity and Christianity's murderous progeny—Fascism, Marxian Communism, and Democracy." We like the thoroughgoing spirit of this, though when all the above are disposed of there will apparently be nothing left but the works of D. H. Lawrence, "the phallos and the womb." These, however, may be sufficient, for it is proposed that the disciples "go off together to some remote, fruitful place, to whatever haven on earth, the life spirit leads us to." Meanwhile, to collectors of special magazines, we can recommend *The Phoenix* as one of the most unusual.

To groups in schools and colleges who would like to print a poetry magazine at minimum expense, we urge the sensible plan adopted by *Virginia Verse*, a clearly mimeographed booklet of sixteen pages, edited by Chad Walsh and Robert F. Schenkkan at the University of Virginia. Mr. Walsh writes: "A magazine like this can be

Notes on Contributors

published at very little cost. We borrow the use of a mimeograph, and type the stencils ourselves. Much more interest has been attracted than we anticipated. The university paper has run long stories about it, and several announcements have been made over the local radio station. We have a paid subscription list of 130, which is sufficient, at 25c for the five issues this session, to pay all expenses. In addition, we have placed self-serving stands in several stores so that people can buy individual copies at 10c each. Despite the poor appearance of the magazine from the standpoint of printing, it *does* furnish a place where students interested in poetry can see their work published. It is a kind of clearing house, where each student can see what his friends are doing. I believe the development of American poetry depends on lots of people writing poetry."

We have the honor to announce that our July verse section will be devoted to the work of poets employed on the Federal Writers' Project throughout America. This special number, which has been made possible through the generous co-operation of Willard Maas, will offer a striking variety of style and subject-matter. Several interesting newcomers will be represented, in addition to poets already familiar. Their work will be grouped in one issue as a tribute to the extremely high level of creative talent being fostered by the Writers' Project.

Because of the increasing quantity of manuscript, Jessica North no longer finds it possible to shoulder the full duties of associate editor. She has asked to be relieved of some of the work, in order to devote more time to her novel writing. Peter DeVries, who has been acting as first reader since April, has kindly consented to remain, and now joins the staff permanently as an associate editor. Mr. DeVries is a young Chicago writer who has contributed poems and fiction to *Esquire*, *Story*, etc. He appeared for the first time in *POETRY* last January.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

H. H. LEWIS is an American farmhand poet whose work, still generally unknown in his own country, has been translated into Russian, French, Japanese, Chinese, and Esperanto. He is the author of four pamphlets, all now exhausted: *Red Renaissance*, 1930; *Thinking of Russia*, 1932; *Salvation*, 1934; *Road to Utterly*, 1935. These were reviewed in our issue of January 1936 by William Carlos Williams, who said of Lewis: "He has the one great strength without which there can be no art at all—belief, a belief in his own songs, in their

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absolute value, the power of their words to penetrate to the very bones of his listeners." The ceremonial destruction of Lewis' second pamphlet figured in the "Hearst riots" at San Francisco in 1934.

H. D., now resident in Switzerland, requires no introduction to our readers. She has been a frequent contributor since the first year of the magazine, and was one of the founders of Imagism. Her latest book is the translation of the *Ion of Euripides*, reviewed in our December issue by Richmond Lattimore. Harriet Monroe said of this poet that, with Pound, Flint, and the others, she "shook the Victorian tradition and discarded its excesses."

"JOHN WHEELWRIGHT," Malcolm Cowley has written, "is not a popular or easy poet, but he is . . . one of the very few whose poems demand and reward a second and third reading." The two poems in this issue will form part of a novel in sonnets, *Mirrors of Venus*, to be published in the autumn by Bruce Humphries. Mr. Wheelwright lives in Boston.

EDITH FRANKLIN WYATT, the distinguished Chicago writer, has been a contributor to POETRY since its beginning, and served for many years on our Advisory Committee. She is the author of several novels and volumes of essays, and of a book of poems, *The Wind in the Corn*, published by D. Appleton & Co.

LINCOLN FITZELL, the recipient of this year's Shelley Memorial Award, was born in San Francisco in 1903 and educated at the University of California and at Harvard. After several years' residence in Europe and the east, he now lives in Berkeley, Calif. His work has appeared in *The New Republic*, *The American Caravan*, and other periodicals, including POETRY.

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV was born in Yugoslavia in 1915 and brought to America as a child. He is at present doing graduate work at the University of Chicago, where he has been active in the recent vigorous revival of the campus Poetry Club. He is in demand as a lecturer on modern poetry, and in 1937 received our Midland Authors Prize.

EDWARD WEISMILLER, who has lately received a Rhodes Scholarship, was born in a Wisconsin Swiss Colony in 1915 and is now finishing his studies at Cornell College (Mt. Vernon, Iowa). His first book of poems, *The Deer Come Down*, was published in 1936 by the Yale University Press.

S. FUNAROFF, of New York, is a well known contributor to POETRY and other magazines, and was editor of the *Dynamo Poets' Series*. His first book of poems, *The Spider and the Clock*, has just been issued by International Publishers.

Notes on Contributors

MARIE DEL. WELCH, of San Francisco, was introduced to our readers in 1927. She is the author of *Poems*, published in 1933 by MacMillan. The following, in addition to Mr. Lewis, make their first appearance here:

E. L. MAYO was born in Dorchester, Mass. in 1904, went to Bates College in Maine, and after writing "the un-great, un-American novel" worked as a wine steward in a hotel in the Bahamas. In 1936 he received his M.A. at the University of Minnesota, where he edited the *Minnesota Quarterly*, and is now an English instructor in the North Dakota State College at Fargo. He has contributed to *American Prefaces* and other magazines, but has not yet published a book.

WALTER HENDRICKS was born in Chicago and educated at Amherst, where he studied under Robert Frost and Stark Young. During the war he served as an aviator. For some years he has headed the English Department at the Armour Institute of Technology (Chicago), and has published several books of poems, the most recent being *Double Dealer*.

LLOYD FRANKENBERG was born in 1907 in Mt. Vernon, N. Y., and has lived mostly in New York City. As an undergraduate at Columbia, he edited *Morningside*. His work has appeared in *The Forum*, *The London Mercury*, and elsewhere.

KEITH THOMAS was born in Kansas, educated at Nebraska University, and now lives in the lower Rio Grande Valley at Mission, Texas. His poems have appeared in a number of magazines, including *The Southwest Review*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *The North American Review*, etc.

LORI PETRI, born in Dallas, Texas, is a Californian by adoption, now resident in San Rafael. She has contributed to various magazines and is the author of a book of poems, *Fools or Gods*.

This month's prose writers are all familiar. T. C. WILSON, one of the outstanding younger critics, is American correspondent for *Life and Letters Today*. BABETTE DEUTSCH is the author of the noted critical study, *This Modern Poetry*, as well as of several novels and other books of verse and criticism. REUEL DENNEY, whose group of poems in our December issue attracted wide attention, is a young Buffalo writer. KERKER QUINN, of the English faculty of the University of Illinois, contributes verse and criticism to various periodicals. RUTH LECHLITNER, also well known as poet and reviewer, is the author of *Tomorrow's Phoenix*, recently published by the Alceste Press. She lives in Cold Spring-on-Hudson.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Winter-Burning*, by Lindley Williams Hubbell. Alfred A. Knopf.
Steel 1937, by W. Lowenfels. Unity Publishers, Atlantic City, N. J.
Foliage, by W. H. Davies. Bruce Humphries.
The Painter's Voice, by William Kiddier. Bruce Humphries.
The Gypsy Lure, by Elizabeth P. Allan. Henry Harrison.
Moods, A Book of Verse, by Idabelle Yeiser. The Colony Press, Philadelphia, Pa.
Pedestrian, by Mary Ellen Jackson. Arthur H. Stockwell, London, England.
Songs of Earth, by Ignace M. Inganni. Wings Press, N.Y.C.
Out of Destruction's Reach, by Katherine Carr. Priv. ptd., Chicago.
I. Shako, Alumnus, and Other Verse, by Roberta Daniels. Sheffer-Wirt Corp., Chicago.
Riding Lessons on Pegasus, by Prestonia Mann Martin. Priv. ptd., Winter Park, Fla.
The Micmac Trail, by A. P. Goudey. Bruce Humphries.
Words To be Read Aloud, by Edgar B. Cronkhite. Bishop Pub. Co., Denver, Colo.

PLAYS AND PROSE:

- The Herne's Egg and Other Plays*, by W. B. Yeats. Macmillan Co.
Robin Landing, by Stanley Young. Farrar & Rinehart.
The Cherry Tart and Other Plays, by Antoinette Scudder. Priv. ptd.
Never to Die, The Egyptians in Their Own Words, Commentary and Arrangement of Text and Pictures by Josephine Mayer and Tom Prideaux. Viking Press.
Vertébralist Pamphlet, by Eugene Jolas. Transition Press, Paris, France.
The Manuscripts of D. H. Lawrence, A Descriptive Catalog, Compiled by Lawrence Clark Powell. Los Angeles, Public Library, Los Angeles.

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In relating this poetry competition to the major world issues of the day, the Editors are not seeking to offer a theme but merely to strike a keynote. It is hoped to secure clear, uncomplicated texts which may be set to music.

The Editors hope that many leading American poets will be moved to enter the competition which has been divided into groups, with prizes for each, as follows:

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The Olivet Writer's Conference, of Olivet College, Michigan, offers a fellowship for 1939 covering all costs of the Conference, to the prize-winning contestant who, in the opinion of the Conference admissions committee, seems most likely to benefit by attendance at the Conference.

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A copy of "The Complete Rhyming Dictionary," edited by Clement Wood, will be awarded to each of the 50 contestants who seem most likely to profit by it.

JUDGES—Padraic Colum, William Allan Neilson, Carl Van Doren

INSTRUCTIONS:—No poem is to exceed 40 lines in length. Manuscripts must be addressed to the Poetry Contest Editor, THE FORUM, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York City; and must be mailed before midnight of June 30, 1938. Under no circumstances will any manuscript be returned or its receipt acknowledged. Manuscripts must be clearly marked with the name and address of the contestant and with the group letter (A, B, or C) of the class in which the poem is being entered. Contestants in class B or C must state name of college or school attended. In order to qualify for a prize, the contestant must accompany his submission with a remittance of 25 cents in stamps.

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POETRY CONTEST

Comments

Dear Mr. Leach,

Thank you for telling me about the prizes offered by THE FORUM for contests on poems for free institutions. Most popular movements have been accompanied by such things, and a great deal of their success has been due to the music to which they are set. It is hard to tell beforehand what will catch the popular ear, but I wish you all success in these prizes.

Yours very sincerely,

Boston, Mass

A LAWRENCE LOWELL

HENRY G. LEACH, Esq.,

Every good wish for your poetry contest. I think it is an excellent idea and I hope it will have an effect.

Yours sincerely,

Westport, Connecticut

VAN WYCK BROOKS

Dear Dr. Leach,

We need to revive the sentiment and devotion to our institutions which have been so effective in bringing us along our national course thus far. To be successful, democracy must enlist the majority of the people in its support. This calls for the revival of sentiment, loyalty and a consciousness of our interwoven responsibilities as individual citizens and as a Nation.

Very sincerely,

The Secretary of Commerce
Washington

DANIEL C. ROPER

Dear Mr. Leach,

In this day of bewilderment and pessimism, effective measures for the reinforcement of American devotion to democracy are not only desirable but necessary. I believe the FORUM's search for stirring poetic statements of that devotion is a highly commendable undertaking, and you have my heartiest wishes for its success.

Sincerely,

Lansing, Michigan
Executive Office

FRANK MURPHY

Dear Mr. Leach,

I think you have a grand idea in the contest THE FORUM is to sponsor and hope it works out successfully.

Very sincerely yours,

The White House

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The Pegasus on the Cover by Eric Gill

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LII

NO. IV

JULY 1938

FEDERAL POETS' NUMBER

TWO POEMS

HOLD THE WIRE

IF THE doorbell rings and we think we were followed
here; if the bell should ring but we are not sure,
how can we decide,

IF IT'S ONLY THE GAS MAN it may be all right,
IF HE'S AN AUTHORIZED PERSON IN
A DOUBLE-BREADED SUIT we'd better
get it over, IF HE'S JUST A NOBODY it
may be good news,
or it might mean death IF THE SAMPLES ARE

[173]

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

FREE
HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE THE PERSON
THAT YOU SAY,

Decide, decide,
we'd better be certain if we live just once, and the
sooner the better if we must decide,

BUT NOT IF IT'S WAR,
not until we've counted the squares on the wallpaper
over and added up the circles and the circles match
the squares,
shall we move to the Ritz if rails go up,
if they sign for peace we return to the city, if they
burn and bomb the city we will go to the moun-
tains,
who will kill us, if they do, and who will carry on our
work,

Who are you, who are you, you have the right number but
the connection's very poor,
we can hear you plain enough but we don't like what
you're saying,
yes, the order was received, but we asked for something
else,

ARE YOU THE INVENTOR WHO WANTS TO
SELL US AN INVISIBLE MAN?

Kenneth Fearing

ARE YOU SOME ONE VERY FAMOUS FROM
THE MISSING PERSONS BUREAU BUT
YOU CAN'T RECALL THE NAME?
IF IT'S ANOTHER BILL COLLECTOR THERE IS
NO ONE HERE AT ALL,
IF IT'S ADOLPH HITLER, IF IT'S THE SUBWAY
LOVER, IF IT'S JACK THE RIPPER,
SEND HIM IN, SEND HIM IN, IF IT'S JOLLY
JACK THE RIPPER IN A DOUBLE-
BREASTED SUIT AND THE SAMPLES
ARE FREE.

A DOLLAR'S WORTH OF BLOOD, PLEASE

With the last memo checked: *They will sign, success;* with
the phone put down upon the day's last call; then
with the door locked at last,
wait, think,
what should the final memo be?

SAY THE LAST WORD
SAY THE LAST WORD ADDING ALL WE'VE
MADE AND LOST
SAY THE LAST WORD TO WEIGH THE
TRIUMPH SEALED IN INK AGAINST
THE DEBT PRESERVED IN STONE AND
THE PROFIT LOCKED IN STEEL

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

One final word that the doorman knows, too, and the lawyer
and the drunk,
that the clerk knows, too, sure of tomorrow's pleasant
surprise,
and the stranger, who knows there is nothing on earth
more costly than hope, and nothing in all the
world held one-half so cheap as life,

SAY THE FINAL WORD THAT NEED NEVER BE
CHANGED

Say the last word about the hard bought doubts,
say the last word to prove there is a use for the hard
won guile,
say the last word that stands above and beyond the
never - ending weakness and the never - failing
strength,

SAY THE LAST WORD, YOU LONG STRAIGHT
STREETS

SAY THE LAST WORD, YOU DUMB GUY, WISE
GUY, FALL GUY, RIGHT GUY, SOFT
GUY, TOUGH GUY,

SAY THE LAST WORD, YOU BLACK SKY
ABOVE.

Kenneth Fearing

A LITTLE NIGHTMUSIC

It is half past one
At half past one
The nightboy in the empty elevator
Seduces blondes he cannot have by day
The groceryman imagines he spots burglars
And reaches in a nightmare for a gun
A gun that isn't there
At half past one
While cleaning women scrubbing corridors
Wipe out the office cuspidors
And wheeze on chapped rheumatic knees
Down disinfected stairs.

As somewhere in a South Street rooming house
Owned by a widow asthmatic and devout
An ironworker lurches in a dream
And in a dream
Drops from a catwalk of air
And awakens the widow with his scream
While down Minetta Lane a stockhouse runner
Counts his money through a haze of gin
And pushes on the bell until
A yellow girl looks out and lets him in.

And north to Westchester
And south to Battery Park

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The shades are drawn on all the flats
And all the rooms are dark
On all those sleepers who await the sun
At half past one
And guard against the enigmas of the night
And the unsuspected disaster
That comes at the hour
No one suspects and no one knows
With a little dried love and the reassuring clocks
The tender voices of rented radios.

Alfred Hayes

CITY

It's noises the triphammer drill the
Incessant riveting the bang and roll of
Trash-cans the clash of gears the El wheels
The pneumatic tumult of subways
The booming headlines the never-stillness of
Always some voice some footstep
It's the truck-rumbled dawns the taxied dusks
The chug and thud of buses the
Sticky whine of tires the angry horns the clang of
Fire-trucks the cataclysmic sirens the cop-whistles
It's noises that mean city

James Daly

COMPLINE OF THE MEN OF PEACE

Now night:

the mists have come, those
rains of seasons elsewhere, and walk the lighted streets
the scavengers in peace now glean.

The sheen of the moon is on the leaves:

elsewhere,
the pallid sheen of the first sun is on the guns.
Orion in the airs seeks now the blossom of another day
to deck the pear:

the courier with first reports
seeks now the General, and the spread, unfolded sheets
name the number of the unnumbered, nameless dead.

The sheen of the moon is on the leaves: in rooms,
the men of peace now kneel,—the day's unfruitfulness,
like Karnak, fallen in the halls; like Egypt,
a wrangle of wrenched columns between bed and sleep:

"Mea culpa,
mea culpa".

Elsewhere, by first of dawn,
now rise on bloodless wings the men of war.

The sheen of moon is on the leaves. The winds

Raymond E. F. Larsson

drops from the air an earthward star of desolation,
explosively aflower with death. The men of peace, as dust,
abase themselves to praise: the gunners in the hidden trench
take aim, and stones which shall stand when rock and earth
are past crash as a cornerstone.

The men of peace, with folded hands, contritely to the dark
abase their ways:

*"Fiat voluntas tuae sicut in caelo,
et in terra":*

by dawn, the blasted, bloody bowels
disgorge among the sprouted wheat. The men of war, on
charts,
place redly crosses marking in the dawn to come
the fruity death in desolation beneath the budding pear.

"Who livest and reignest God, world without end":
the men of peace now turn to sleep. The walls of rooms
house now the carnage of their dreams.

In sleepless tombs,
the men of peace turn on their beds and writhe:
the evening paper
at their head, the morning journal at their feet—

the epitaph of sleep: the name spelled bloodily of "SPAIN".

Raymond E. F. Larsson

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

SPEECH

The airman on gleaming pinions
leaping aerial blue
is companioned by danger.

A wire may break and the wings tremble
and the frame whirl and flame
across the horizon.

But he thinks only of the flight
and attends the controls.

Knowing that we must die
and the bluest, the loveliest flower
is dusted with bones of the remotely dead,

let us likewise
think of controls: and fear only
lack in our skill.

Our days are plagued by the ironic grins
of passionless who grin at virtue;
they are dull; their comfort pitiful.

Let us have praise for those who dare:
the great in heart: the lovers of mankind:
and let us have daring ourselves.

William Pillin

For it is shame to view the ardent young
and how the petals of their vibrant day
are blown in vain, swept by the winds that sprang
from nowhere into nothing and again.

William Pillin

IT IS MY FAULT

The impact of pale charity upon
This thin dark face indicts my smooth conceit;
That men for bread are given stones to eat
Is my own fault. I am the guilty one.

For I have been afraid to annoy the great,
And to the tyrant I have bent the knee;
When I protested I spoke low and late.
Ten thousand years this fault has been with me.

I lie, I cheat, I steal, I go deceiving
To keep my own place in the jealous sun,
All this for the sweet cowardice of living,
And I am you, and I am everyone.

Lawrence Estavan

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

COMMON THREAT

How I wait for some one to knock
 at my door!
Ripostes of anger, denial,
 frustration and deprivation:
These staggering nuances pass me by.

And should some one knock,
I'd boldly up and take
Full measure for measure,
Cup flowing to overflowing:
 Airing my anger,
 Shouting my denial,
 Crying out my frustration,
 Screaming my deprivation!

These staggering nuances shall not pass me by!
 Norton Krieger

TO FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

Guitarist, singer of folk-songs,
strolling player who in the wilderness
strayed where the black pigs bred,
beasts in the ruins of a castle,
wild boars in the towers, grunting
the lord's prayer in the minarets,—
rooting in the stubble of moorish arches,
roman columns, armor of knights
and broken lances in moats;
and on the battlements
mangled limbs of the greek heroes;
swine grazing in the weeds of romances,
snouts in the leaves of the classics.
Devoured, the poems bled; yours the blood:
spilled by the shrewd bargainer,
March, the merchant, illiterate dealer in swine,
gun-runner who sought to still your voice
with gun-fire: the cries of a huckster
trading a nation.

Lorca, you who were the morning song of Spain,
the song is on the lips of the people!

S. Funaroff

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

DEPOSITIONS FOR THE FATHERLAND

1

Guide, oh guard this star, lion.
The storm falls, the beasts huddle.
Bull and scorpion divide the sky.

In the tunnel in the shell of the hermit crab,
In the hole in the belly of the sea cucumber,
Weak in shelter and shadow,

Our passionals were of amazement,
Of tiger, tiger, and of Alexander,
The cool killer and the symmetrical monster.

In those distant deeps and skies
Console us with constellations
Indistinct in the twilight.
Guide the theatre of animals
Far from polyp and from nematode.
Guard us with inconceivables.

2

How shall the burnished sentient cone
Come near the unbelieving dark,
The dark more dearly loved than known.

Dorothy Van Ghent

The dark is famous in its way.
The dark is dignified with blisses,
And through the wild dark run our kisses.

The monster on the flowered hill,
The poison in the expensive trinket,
The serpent in the children's blanket,

The paupers and the surpluses
Are ancient kindred of the cell,
Primeval heritage of will.

Who will conceive, who will admire
The nervous element of fire
Descending on the deep abysses.

3

Only the similitude is eager.
Only the burning feeling is the tiger
Divide the deed that anger

May extend the danger.
The nominal lion and the lamb
Rehearsing to our times its name

Explode the trigger
Scatter in dreadful roar
The veritable war.

THE YOUNG ONES

With cotton to the doorstep
No place to play;
No time: what with chopping cotton
All the day.

In the broken down car
They jounce up and down
Pretend to be steering
On the way to town.

It's as far as they'll get
For many a year;
Cotton brought them
And will keep them here.

The spare-ribbed yard-dog
Has gone away;
The kids, just as hungry,
Have to stay.

In the two-roomed shack
Their mammy is lying,
With a little new brother
On her arm, crying.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Another mouth to feed
Another body to bed,
Another to grow up
Underfed.

But their pappy's happy
And they hear him say:
"The good Lord giveth,
And taketh away.

"It's two more hands
For to carry a row;
Praise God from whom
All blessings flow."

Sterling A. Brown

HARDY PERENNIALS

Fat are the flowers
That feast on flies,
And sweet the graves
That choke with flowers.
Days like traps
Feed upon our wants,
And rank, and tall
And perennial
Grow ours.

Mark Turbyfill

TIME'S EMBRACE

Now shall no face create futures,
or Time make heritage
of living image.

Nor shall it be as with some old woman in the sun
warming herself with sun's reflections
of the child warm with living suns.

Is all reckoned? Is the world here?
is Time now? shall we die?
Where is the blossom of eternity

to blend with light the blossom, the true sun
to imprint the sun forever upon waning flesh?
O I did not take the sun in a season's flash!

nor with bloom color the swollen blossom, nor through
waste eyes see eternity made new:
the child's happiness folding the hour's light.

This is the world and I and my friend's face
beyond these hours Complete in Time's embrace

the light falls in the hour under the dark hours

Helen Neville

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

LAST YEAR'S FLOWERS PHOTOGRAPHED

Last year's flowers photographed
carelessly are the daft
remainder of summer's sum,
fruition, spent emotion, one
holiday with one person,
hallowed, made holy, by sun:

pathetic fetish, relic
of rollick, reminder, nick
on time's ready gun-barrel,
trigger-certain to settle
more ghost-seedlings in a ground
unsuspected by pistil,
stamen, or shrewd botanist.

Paste it, floral-piece, on his list,
emotion-montage by the
patient's pulsing, apt to be
credit jotting where debit
is clinic curve by habit:

discount trifles—the heavy
pie, halter for the hungry,

Charles Hudeburg

coffee the other courses,
those loud bed-springs, the curses,
the terrific cigarette,
borrowed, and the weak sweet sweat.
Add a beer if you can pay for it.

A SONG

Lovely, the weight of love
that lies alike on bull, on dove,
on kine and hind and boar and bear,
equal for equal everywhere.

Sages in sagas often say
the way in is the way away,
with the trumpeting and rearing,
the sweat and the secret searing.

Dispute and mute them with a pout:
the way out is the way about,
and the onion has companion,
no quarrel for reason, season.

Charles Hudeburg

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

SUMMONS AT NIGHT

The night is down upon us
here in the deep
confusion of capitalistic greed,

Where soul meets soul
only in retreat and fright.

What holds
the shadow of this night?
The bloated beast
in man that drags
its belly on the ground
with food three times its need.

It cannot think,
it only grunts and craves

For all made more delicious
because produced by slaves.

Comrades! It is time
to be more than aware
of flight and doom.

Take the beast by the bit:
Do not be torn
by lesser strength than your own

Virgil Geddes

You have a might
that's fortified
by what it knows
and will not trust

To those who turn
guiltily in their sleep.

Rise we must.
Our future cannot be too soon.

Virgil Geddes

THE SCULPTOR YEAR

The sculptor year has rounded out his plan,
the frieze is carved, the high relief is sketched,
and on the rising central figure, Man,
even the lines from nose to mouth are etched
deep in the hardening clay. The eyes are rolled
as if toward some eternal foe behind,
and standing out from shadows deep and bold
are sinews taut from flight. Groping to find
paths in the sightless dark, the hands of clay
possess a mineral uncertainty.
Stroking his beard, the sculptor turns away,
followed by frightened eyes that cannot see.

Seymour Gordden Link

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

TWO POEMS

THE INQUIRY

Do you wear a web over your wasted worth?

I wear a web

You fear the keyhole's splintered eye?

I fear the eye

Can you hear the worthless morning's mirth?

I hear it

The broken braying from whitening skies?

Yes I hear it yes

To spend the end and feed the fire

is day's insistence, night's demand:

to pay the unrequested fare

and wave the wavering wand.

The streets are full of broken glass,

sparkling in this frenzied noon.

With naked feet and bandaged eyes

you'll walk them—not just now, but soon.

Weldon Kees

POEM

Mind's residue is vein-violet
(old women with their stockings
hanging down)—gorged with
color and superb as light.
"The spangled riddle is twitter
and purr," the mussels murmured.
Then departed.

Of an evening,
in the empty park, sometimes I hear
the rustle of revival-meeting
pamphlets. Band music, with
surrealist trumpets, knives the air.
Eagles with tusks perform in sieves.
The ectoplasm of Immanuel Kant unwittingly appears.

These bilious things, fracturing
the night's surface, swerve
into graphs, hanging like crags in jagged lines:
—profound, perfect, and
not without meaning.

Weldon Kees

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THE STRUGGLE STAGGERS US

Our birth and death are easy hours like sleep
and food and drink. The struggle staggers us
for bread, for pride, for simple dignity.
And this is more than fighting to exist,
more than revolt and war and human odds.
There is a journey from the Me to You.
There is a journey from the You to Me.
A union of the two strange worlds must be.

Ours is a struggle from a too warm bed,
too cluttered with a patience full of sleep.
Out of this blackness we must struggle forth;
from want of bread, of pride, of dignity.
Struggle between the morning and the night,
this marks our years, this settles, too, our plight.

Margaret Walker

SEA AND LAND

Nothing is here but the sky,
which brightens the lone breakers—
rolling on the beach!
the white surf sounding
among the inland trees. The birds,
chirping, hang on the leaves
like modern flowers, with eyes and mouth
and wings that seek the seeker out;
whose chatter is recorded in our books
like an auto horn!
yet where autos cannot ride the breakers,
cannot glide through forests, climb on trees;
 not made of gears that spin
 the crowded fronts of the sagging world —
where the roads in ovals thin
the whirling passengers in uneven race;
 from air, to land and sea
 they drift in space.

Harry Roskolenko

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

FROM "THE CRISIS"

I

you return breathless having started
phoenixes in the arroyos and having seen
on porphyry altars the pelican
rend itself tirelessly and the creature
with uncounted eyes
and who now creaking in rust soft armour
will bring this taper to the outer room
o the lost phalanxes the engulfed Gemini
where the guillotine animal flies over the drowned lands
and the bleached heads turn incuriously
and no hand lifts
this Prometheus breeds his own eaglets
at first daybreak a voice opens crevices in the air
"fear no more"
the horns of those grey hunters wind along
ridges more inaccessible than dream
speak not let no word break
the stillness of this anguish
the omniscience of this vertigo
these lucent needles are fluent
in the gold of every memory
the past curls like wire

II

and now surprised by lunar mountain avatars
the avid eyes of gravid mice entice
each icy nostrum of the zodiac
sidelong on quavering feet the giants tread
the white Excaliburs the zero saws
the igneous granite pencils silvering
the plunge of light the conies barking
the white lips speak and Danae
Danae writhing in the fluent metal
the camels the llamas the dogsleds the burros
are loaded and go off in the white distance
and green over them the nova grows above the pass

III

shall see no more then what the daylight's after
shall ask no more then forget the asker
shall fail at laughter and in the dark
go mumbling the parched gums fumbling the baggy heart
bark with the mice in the rubbish bayed at by rats
the glaciers are senile and covered with dust but the mountain cracks
the orange red granite breaks and the long black slivers fall
fine ice in the air and the stone blades falling and the opening vault

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

and the high milk blue lake tipping over its edge in a mile
long wavering water-fall
and for these weapons in what forge and from what steel
and for this wheat what winnowing floor what flail

Kenneth Rexroth

SANCTUARY

I see my dead, lying in the slops
of the gutter,

I see my dead, driven from the doors
of the shelter,

I see my dead, harried to the holes
of the shambles,

I see my dead, saith the Lord :

*He sees his dead, say the dead,
clinging to the ghost of his altar.*

Charlotte Wilder

LITANY

For the cast aside and slighted;
For the doer of unrequited good;
For the weeper in dark places,
Whom no mortal claims in brotherhood;

For the hugger close of sorrow;
For the stupid wise enough for pain;
For the unthanked and the unwelcome,
The giver whose gift is made in vain;

For the sufferer who is silent;
For the sufferer who grotesquely cries;
For the timid and deserted,
Him the careless and the harsh despise;

For the unbeloved lover;
For the rebuffed of self-sufficient men;
For the vanquished tired with fighting,
The lonely without heart to seek again.

Miriam Allen deFord

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

MY SO MUCH LOVED VARIETY

The heavens rejoice in motion, why should I
abjure my so much loved variety?

John Donne

Love came like crates, piled at the terminal station.
I smiled acceptance, thinking of old Dean Donne
and how he would have pranced, unpacking one
crate and another with a child's elation.
First came the artificial hearth, equipped
with irons to stir an artificial fire,
then came a mattress stitched for hard desire.
I put the little plant out in the sun.
So let me kiss you, now that I have whipped
the tenderness from me and let me look
no deeper in your eyes than I have seen
a lengthy bill of lading in a book.
For I have signed my name to it, who lean
above your breast, *quite* reverent, like the Dean.

Lola Pergament

BLOND CAT

Under her conversation,
Under her yellow hair,
I touched the skull
Of a bald headed man
Who was playing cards with her
In a game I did not understand.
Then she disappeared
Into the lining of her gown
And in my lap
I found
A big blond cat
Looking up at me
With great electric eyes.
I rubbed her yellow fur,
I stroked her velvet throat,
And went on learning
From the bald headed man
The game I did not understand.

Melvin G. Shelley

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THE END OF THE WORLD

Come, let him part his skin
For enormous breasts
Anoint his thighs
Clutch with his mouth!

For in his veins
Pale as stone, Death
With the ceaseless quiver
Of water is riding fast

Arrk! screams his heart
Like an eagle trapped
Like a god's head crushed
Among the clouds

Locked forever—hidden,
What incandescent orgies
What transformations and returns;
Let the angels congregate!

Harold Rosenberg

And the archbishop
With enormous hands,
Kings, gypsies, generals, all
Thrown up by a dying age

Here at the bed
Of the Purely Personal
Luminous and prone; in whom
Like an aquarium

The lips of the Organic
Separate and close—while bone
Crumbles unnoticed
From his waving limbs.

Open the Book, Monsignor,
And bray the organ vowels:
In nomine . . . comforting as cannons
That blast his breath away.

Harold Rosenberg

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

DEFENSELESS SPRING

1200 killed in new raid on Barcelona —
And not a quiver in this lazy air!
The streets are bright to-day.
Even the cops drive out upon the pier
And stand
And stare down the river.
The water's cold but soon
Kids will be diving.
Now smoke curls upward
Like a warm color.
Women come out of doorways
As if out of the ground.
Grey street corners
Grow flower sellers.
On fire escapes
Bedding blossoms.
People sit in the sun.

Defenseless spring,
Miraculous, dangerous season —
Caught like a sleepwalker
40 stories up,
Still
The wind feels good.

H. R. Hays

JOURNEY AND RETURN

Whatever our hearts spoke
We shall remember then:
Pink animals of the sea
Touched by our hands,
The sound of the trees
In the early morning dark
Breaking like waves over the black land.

Travel far where the castles
Rot by the brown rivers
And the pheasants stir the thistles,
The liner plunges the ocean,
And the breast gives back
To the flesh the lover
And the night's sweet motion.

What touch of hand recalls the years
And the lips remember:
The coffee house on the speedway, the arbor
With the hammock, the motor races,
The island out beyond the harbor
And the rumors of the war
Laid out upon the grass.

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The glass bottom boat moved soundlessly
Over the violet water,
Star fish and anemones,
Pink dahlias of the sea,
Spreading beneath the lovers' eyes.
The jagged cliffs reached out beyond the sky,
Breath leaned to breath, knees to knees.

We saw the little town hidden in pines,
The small houses with blue shutters
Carved with crescent moons,
Millionaires and their Byzantine towers,
Japanese gardens in Italian ruins,
And the big blue foreign limousines
Brought the bankers' wives to the moonlit dunes.

Travel far where the sphinx stands
Crumbling with an empire,
The gold statues and the tall sands,
And our thoughts turn back to the hills,
Asphalt roads through the hot valley,
The arms circling about bonfires
The night before the football rally.

Willard Maas

We were in love with the movie queen
Kissing the celluloid dark,
The newsreel sports, the travelogue,
Tennis on the lawn in the afternoons,
While the pale boys with the luminous eyes
Passed on the sidewalk arm in arm
And disappeared in the dangerous park.

Fathom beyond the microscope
And the salamander dissected
Where the doors unfold
Revealing the heart infected,
The hot band and the new jazz step,
The falling markets, graduation,
And the parents growing old.

And whatever our hearts spoke
We shall remember now
As the moon curdles red and the hills
Are lost with the spring's bright boughs,
And the naked trees in the dark
Cry out with dreams before we awake
With machineguns mounted on the window sills.

Willard Maas

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IN CHALLENGE NOT DEFENSE

THE time is past for the defenses of poetry. The defenses have all been written. The time now is for the challenges.

The patient, kidding, ironical challenges to those who tell us poetry is dead. Let them bury it then. Let them bury the big bones of Yeats and the Hamlet-grinning skull of Eliot and the man-smelling shirt of Carl Sandburg and the splintered china and bright glass of Wallace Stevens and the quiet cricket-talking of Frost in the dead leaves and the mole-rummaging under the lot of Ezra Pound and the tens and twenties of young ones writing a great line like a motto cut into marble and throwing it out like trash for the promise of something better just beyond. Let them bury them all if they can, heaping the disappointed, middle-aging words on the top for an epitaph. Let them bury them all and go off with the crocodile tears in their eyes and return with the next day's sun to the big hole in the ground and the snicker of grasshoppers.

The loudmouthed, disrespectful, horselaughing challenges to those who tell us poetry is "pure". Those who tell us poetry is "poetry". Those who tell us poetry is a parlor game and has no truck with the living of live men or the misery of hungry men or the politics of ambitious men or the indignation of believing men. Those who tell us the eternal poetry is the poetry written about the feeling of being dreadfully alone. Those with the High Standards.

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(The impotent have the High Standards: the begetters beget.) Those with the Love of Posterity. (Posterity is the offspring of the childless.) Those who escape into mirrors—into the gentleman-farms and the upstairs rooms with the view of the river and the seminars at five p.m. The loudmouthed disrespectful challenge to all such to come out of their words and their paragraphs into the open air of the art and say their say in the sun with the wind blowing. The loudmouthed disrespectful challenge to look at the actual world and say what poetry is native to the actual world: to read the poetry of Dante and say what poetry is native to the actual world; to read the poetry of Shakespeare and say what poetry is native to the actual world; to lay their High Standards down alongside the poetry of Dante and of Shakespeare and see how small an inch their yard-stick measures in the actual world.

The time is past for the defenses and the time has come for the challenges because there is no way of stating the defense of poetry which does not become a challenge. There is no way of asking whether we should permit poetry to continue to exist which does not ask instead whether poetry will permit us to continue to exist. For it is the second question and not the first which is sensible and which must be answered. The first is a question for the debating societies in the preparatory schools. The second is a question for mortal men.

We live in a time of crisis in which the heart of the crisis is that question. The crisis of our time as we are begin-

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ning slowly and painfully to perceive is a crisis not of the hands but of the heart. It is a crisis of hunger—but not a crisis of hunger created by any doubt as to our ability to feed ourselves. It is a crisis of cold—but not a crisis of cold created by any doubt as to our ability to put roofs over our heads or clothes on our backs. It is a material crisis in which there is not now nor has there ever been since the beginning of these times the least question of our material wealth. It is a crisis in other words of which the entire cause lies in the hearts of men.

The failure is a failure of desire. It is because we the people do not wish—because we the people do not know what it is that we should wish—because we the people do not know what kind of world we should imagine, that this trouble hunts us. The failure is a failure of the spirit: a failure of the spirit to imagine; a failure of the spirit to imagine and desire. Human malevolence may perhaps have played its part. There are malevolent men as there are stupid men and greedy men. But they are few against the masses of the people and their malevolence like their stupidity could easily be swept aside if the people wished: if the people knew their wish.

Last year and the year before that and the year before that year men used to talk of the paradox of starvation in the midst of plenty. The implication was that we starved because there were evil men who wished that we should starve or incompetent men who were unable to provide us with food. But truly it was not at all this that the paradox

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of starvation in the midst of plenty implied. The true implication of the bread lines under the heaped up wheat elevators in Minneapolis was the failure of the people, of ourselves the people, to imagine the world in which we wished to believe.

For once we had imagined that world we had only to reach out our hands to make it real. Never before in the history of this earth has it been more nearly possible for a society of men to create the world in which they wished to live. In the past we assumed that the desires of men were easy to discover and that it was only the means to their satisfaction which were difficult. Now we perceive that it is the act of the spirit which is difficult: that the hands can work as we wish them to. It is the act of the spirit which fails in us. With no means or with very few, men who could imagine a common good have created great civilizations. With every means, with every wealth, men who are incapable of imagining a common good create now ruin.

This failure of the spirit is a failure from which only poetry can deliver us. In this incapacity of the people to imagine, this impotence of the people to imagine and believe, only poetry can be of service. For only poetry of all those proud and clumsy instruments by which men explore this planet and themselves, *creates the thing it sees*. Only poetry, exploring the spirit of man, is capable of creating in a breathful of words the common good men have become in-

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capable of imagining for themselves. Only poetry, moving among living men on the living earth, is capable of discovering that common world to which the minds of men do, inwardly, not knowing it, assent.

Certainly the economists to whom we have thus far appealed in the disasters of our time cannot help us. Mathematicians of the mob, their function is to tell us what, as mob, we *have* done. When they call their observations laws and bridge the future with them all their work falls down. When they try to build their theories out beyond the past, ahead of history, they build like wasps with paper. And for this reason: their laws come after, not before, the act of human wishing and the human wish can alter all they know. In Germany and Italy where men, some men, enough men to have power, have imagined life-like melodramas to take up the lack of life, the world's economists are made to look like infants. Both states by every economic rule have been insolvent now for years. And yet they arm, build planes, wage wars, kill Spanish women the economists would say they could not build nor wage nor kill. Economists like all historians believe the future from the past. The future differs from the past in one particular: men wait for it and men can change. Men can grow tired and discouraged and wish change. Men can grow tired of the old excuses and the threadbare frauds and wish new answers. The man who gives them answers from the past and says: You did this once; you'll do this twice, will not persuade them when they're truly tired.

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Only poetry that waits as men wait for the future can persuade them. The church cannot. The church concerns itself with souls but with each soul alone and for a different purpose. It possesses an eternal truth in which the ages of the human spirit, the great successive images which one by one have moved the hearts of men, are like the little winds that blur the sea. It solves the difficult arithmetic of this hard world by writing the equations on a blackboard somewhere else. Poetry can have no elsewhere. Poetry is art and, being art, committed to this earth, confined within the shallow water of this air. Its matter is what men can see and sense and know. Its medium is speech: most common, human, touched and worn of all materials that men have used for art. Its end is man: not men alone, not men in secret—men as they are different,—men turned souls and grown distinguishable for eternity, but man. The common loveliness that all men everywhere have known: the common fears: the common passions: the despairs.

Why do poets, generation after generation, time out of mind, repeat: The sea is beautiful; women are beautiful; the sun is beautiful? Because for each man it is new? No. Because for all men it is old. Because the loveliness, the poetry, is in the commonness, the recognition. Because it is the love, the wonder, that is poetry and not the object of the love or wonder. Generation after generation poetry has kept this record of the hearts of men. We who are now alive, the poets say, we men now living in this earth, we are still loyal to the sun: we are still loyal to the evening

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and the odor of the water in the evening.

Poetry alone in such a time as ours when all the images are blurred and doubtful, when men go starved because they cannot wish in common—poetry alone imagines, and imagining creates, the loyalty for lack of which we cannot live; for lack of which we cannot even eat, be covered and be warm. Poetry alone imagines, and imagining creates, the world that men can wish to live in and make true. For what is lacking in the crisis of our time is only this: this image. Its absence *is* the crisis. The issues men call issues are no issues. The issue between a planned economy and an economy called free is not an issue. The issue between a big-unit regulated economy and a small-unit competitive economy is not an issue. Such differences are differences of tactics, differences of means. The fact that we can talk of them as though they touched the life and death of our society merely betrays the poverty of our minds. Actually the issue, the one issue, we should talk about is this: What do we love? What truly do we love? To what do we desire to be loyal? Once we know the answer to that question everything will follow of itself. Once we know the thing that we desire to be the things that we must do will follow of themselves.

The defense of poetry in this time is a challenge. It is a challenge to all those who quarrel about the means by which the people shall be saved to hold their tongues and be silent until the poets shall have given the people speech. It is a challenge to all those who would stop the mouths of the

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poets with their pantry notions of pure poetry and their gentleman's gentleman's Standards of what a poet does, to hold their tongues and be humble until the poets have been heard. A poet like any other artist, like any other honest man acting as an honest man, does what he must do, what he has no choice but do. In a time like ours his poetry is like the poetry written in this time, for he has no choice but write such poetry. He writes *the people yes* because the *yes* of the people boils up through all the lovely images of the lake beyond the dunes, and all the glimpses backward into personal time, and will not let him rest until it is written. And writing it he brings the mind of this nation one step nearer to an understanding of its will, and one step nearer to an imagination of the world in which it can believe and which, believing, it can bring about.

Those who wish authority for such conclusions may have authority. The authority is Aristotle's. In that great unfinished definition of poetry in which Aristotle distinguished poetry from history he said: history draws things which have happened but poetry things which may possibly happen. In that word "possibly" is the whole æsthetic to justify the human and world-walking poetry of this generation. For the possibility of which Aristotle speaks is human possibility. History draws things which have happened: poetry things which are possible to men. In this time in which everything is possible except the spirit to desire and the love to choose, poetry becomes again the one deliverer of the people.

Archibald MacLeish

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BREAD AND POETRY

TO THE experienced ear of the poet, nothing is quite so tiresome as the oldfashioned, plaint that art can only flourish under hardship and the poet under a leaky roof on a diet of bread and water. This nonsense has an appeal for rocking-chair readers and people who like a good cry with what they read, but the blunt facts are that a man has to live in order to write and exist in order to live. Time spent on economic worriment is time distracted and energy wasted, and a healthy body is a better machine than a starved one. In short, time is another word for freedom and confidence.

Happily, our nation-wide depression, with its problems of relief and unemployment, has brought home the facts and revealed their essential character. Men are out of work through no fault of their own and simply cannot function, privately or publicly. This dangerous problem, as we all know by now, was turned over to the Works Progress Administration and, in the course of human events, artists, along with bankers, farmers and workers in industry, were given jobs at a living wage. Although the government was accused of going into business, and many a Croesus groaned at the mounting taxation, the WPA, notwithstanding its inexperience, the haste in which the projects were established, and the endless red tape through which they were handled, succeeded in doing things which had never been done before and leaving some excellent records on the

calendar. Not the least of these were made by the artists on the four Arts Projects.

Naturally, some of the work has been bad or useless, funds being wasted on men and women who deserved no place among genuine artists. Furthermore, where leadership fell to the wrong persons, workers suffered, and advancement came to people with a talent not for art, but for politics. However, since no society is perfect, and we have to judge any age by its outstanding effort, we may safely assume that the plan as a whole was worthy and merits the further encouragement of the nationally minded citizen. The benefits have been two-fold: The artist has been allowed to work and the public has been made aware of an American cultural movement. Admission to Federal theatres, concerts, galleries and guide books has been nominal, and art has been disseminated among many people to whom it was a foreign language in the past. Still more important, local communities were taught to develop and respect their own creative talents.

In the early days of the Writers' Project, it was found, as elsewhere, that the government had no right to compete with industry—in this case, the professional magazines and publishers. This meant that no author could sit down on government time with a view to writing a book for the regular market. Such work had to be done on spare time and with depleted energies. Since the income on all work done on the projects had to revert to the government, a feeling arose that a man might write a successful novel,

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only to receive \$23.86 a week on a book that sold in the thousands. And the book would be issued, not by his employer, but through a commercial source. This was a complicated problem. It was then the Guide Books were set up and all hands went in for research. This idea, scorned at the outset, has made a fine impression in time, still challenged, however, by the creative spirit. Publishers ultimately welcomed the idea and more and more books were sanctioned by them. In other words, industry found the government helpful and gave its effort a commercial accolade. Meanwhile, the creative writer, finding creative work on the other projects, among painters, sculptors and musicians, demanded more room and time for his own private effort. I don't know just how this problem was solved, but have heard that a creative project now exists among the authors. Out of this movement, two excellent books have emerged: the *American Stuff* anthologies: and collected work has appeared in the magazines. Even the poet has been recognized and he finds his largest welcome in a magazine which has spent more time on poetry than any other magazine in history.

It is not my place to comment on the selections. I have tried to give a brief survey of the background out of which this issue came, and to play fair among the contradictory factors which now make room for the artist in our society. It seems to me (as it does to many other people) that the time has arrived for the creation of an art movement supported by the people through its government, and divorced

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from the "relief" and "charity" associated with the WPA. No self-respecting individual can accept such terms, nor can any of his democratic brethren ask him to accept them. On the other hand, the greatest care must be exerted against subjecting the arts to bureaucracy, or letting the leadership descend to clever people. I'd rather see the poet return to the garret in preference to accepting the condescending forces his defensive position raises. Poetry is an extremely difficult art written, for the most part, by extremely sensitive persons. If they are to be run at all, they should be run by persons who understand them. And this understanding should extend to the poet in these pages: to unknown youth and the poet of the future.

If poets are "odd" at all, they are odd because of a competitive civilization in which men are judged by the money they earn. Plato was not the first man—nor is he the last—to banish the poet. Drive a man into the cold, you force him to become an outlaw and a specialist: his work has a precious tendency and is addressed, apparently, only to the few. But real poetry, the best poetry, comes out of the race and finds expression in its outstanding spirits. To neglect such writers is to neglect the race itself and to consign the age to folly and oblivion.

Alfred Kreymborg

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POETRY PROJECT

AMONG all the crafts and trades that are practiced in America, poetry is the one that most needs and deserves public support. It is the first of all the literary arts and the key to appreciating the others. Yet the poets have gone without wages not only since the depression but since the first English settlement at Jamestown.

It is true that a very few American poets have made a comfortable living by their work. Longfellow did; though I doubt that without a Harvard professorship he could have afforded his big house on Brattle Street. No poet of our own day has earned as much as Longfellow. A few, like Robinson Jeffers, have had a small inherited income. Others have read their poems in public, for very small fees, or have given lectures to Browning Clubs. Two or three at the most have subsisted entirely by selling poems and books of poems. Among them, Edwin Arlington Robinson is an almost heroic example of faithfulness to one ideal in the midst of a poverty that lasted until late in his middle life. Although we all look up to him, not many of us would follow his example. He sacrificed to poetry not only the comforts and luxuries of an ordinary existence, but also some things that are necessary to poets—books, music, travel, the stimulation of meeting other minds as keen as his own. He had to turn in upon himself; and it seems to me that his later poems, in their bodilessness and lack of sensuous warmth, show the result of his early privations.

And these are great men whose names we have just mentioned. Of the rest, we can only say that they got along as best they could. They were janitors or Greenwich Village night-club entertainers or professors or rich women's pets—or else they engaged in other branches of writing, like book reviewing or biography, that yielded a small financial return—or else they abandoned literature altogether and went into advertising or selling, with a feeling of being where they didn't belong. American poetry for the most part has been the expression of adolescent love and lyric frenzy and early sorrow. Some people think that this is the only poetry. But there is also the poetry of maturity, of long projects slowly conceived and executed with patient care. That type of writing we have lacked, and chiefly for the reason that most of our poets have had to cut short their careers before they were well started.

It is not at all certain that those who ceased to write poetry were always less talented than those who persevered. Perhaps they were simply less obstinate or less willing to sacrifice their dependents. On this subject one could argue for hours with no means of reaching a final answer. All we can say is that, in America, there has been a tremendous wastage of poetic talent.

I am of course describing a condition that has prevailed since the beginnings of American literature. The depression years have changed it in two respects. In the first place, there have been very few of those business opportunities that used to tempt poets into other occupations by hold-

ers and composers and playwrights. That is the aim of the Federal Arts Bill, a proposal that has its promise, its faults and its dangers. The faults, I think, are worth correcting and the dangers worth facing. If we want to have poets in this country, we will have to keep them alive.

Malcolm Cowley

A BRIEF STATEMENT

THE economic status of a group of poets, I suppose, cannot make a school of poetry, though it is quite possible that in time the poets' aesthetic approach may tend to unify by the continuation of that status. This is true of non-literary people who register their economic position through political thought and action, and there is no reason to believe that the poet differs greatly from other individuals in that respect. However, at the present time I can see only the slightest relationship between the work of these poets and their collective plight.

This collection of poetry, therefore, may be said to be eclectic, and rightly so, I believe; and it will serve as an argument against those who hold the viewpoint that the establishment of a permanent Federal Bureau of Fine Arts will make for the regimentation of the artist. It would hardly seem appropriate for the writer to attempt an evaluation of the literary merits of this issue, but it is worth noting that almost every current movement in modern poetry is represented, as well as several social viewpoints. For ex-

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ample, R. E. F. Larsson is a well-known Catholic poet, and at least one contributor admits to being a Communist. Geographically, all sections of the country are represented.

But in the end, the most revealing, if shocking discovery to be made, is that these poets, with few exceptions, have been forced to qualify for relief in order to obtain their present connections with the Federal Writers' Project. It is a little ironic, it seems to me, that the poet, the most over-romanticized of all artists, must be reduced to destitution before being allowed a modicum of financial security in order to practice his profession. One can only hope that this will not continue to be the "American Way" of sponsoring art. The passage of the Federal Arts Bill would allow all art, including poetry, to function with dignity in a supposedly democratic and progressive society.

In ending this brief statement, it may be well to add a word as to the conditions under which this work was written and collected. All these poems were written on "off-project time," though many of them were made possible through the writers being given time for creative work. Particularly unpleasant to record is the fact that at the time of this writing the creative endeavors in New York have been curtailed and the creative magazine *American Stuff* suspended. It is hoped that by the time this issue is released, this order will have been rescinded. In any case, this Federal Poets' Number of POETRY should be an affirmative voice for its reestablishment or expansion.

Willard Maas

REVIEWS

A NICE AFTER-DINNER SCOLD

Bullinger Bound and Other Poems, by Leonard Bacon.
Harper & Brothers.

THE intended moral of the book is good—how with adequate persons the performance outruns the desire and what varied forms tragedy or pathos assume where desire outruns performance. To Bacon, the types of the adequate are men who have enough money and sense to go hunting. These (together with dead writers) he contrasts to university students and teachers (and to living writers) as to types of the inadequate.

However good poems Bacon has written (and books of them rise, as Dr. Holmes raised the after-dinner speech at the club or reunion, to the level of literature) his performance has never, it seems, outrun his desire. This soured his natural gusto. Although he condemns Eliot out of court, his message is as dour as Eliot's and as culture-philistine, without Eliot's grace of cultivation or humility before living tradition.

Not the title poem but *Weldon Kirk*, the short story of a poet undone by his English professor, is the best piece in *Bullinger Bound*, which for the most part without *New Yorker* slickness gets only as far as the *New Yorker* towards a literary destination. The title poem is not nearly as diverting reading as the epical rhapsody *Quincibad*; nor is

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Weldon Kirk as final a statement in academic indictment as *Ph.D.'s*.

Bacon's fault has always been a sketchiness which blurs both outline and shade of meaning. Poetry comes hard to him. It is only when in full dress that he gives the illusion of being virtuose and here, where he appears in *négligé*, he appears with negligence. In *Bullinger Bound* all the characters have the same ideas and all speak like the author. As a result, the author's assertions that all contemporary literature is unmitigated bunk are deprived of authority. The same quaint assertion would have seemed, if as dull, at least less sour-bellied if Bacon had had the taste to give it light and shade by the means of folk-craft, in condemning with faint praise. But as he has caught up the scolding tone of State Street *in re* the New Deal, listeners find themselves wondering what it can be that makes him scold so, and they have too little energy left over to learn exactly what it is he scolds about.

John Wheelwright

ARMORED CAR ROBBERY

The Day's Work, by Oscar Brynes. Harcourt, Brace.

This book is a horselaugh at the expense of the New York City police department, and police in general. After perpetrating the crime of sitting upon the dignity of the law and quoting, with tongue in his cheek, from the wisdom of departmental publications, the author makes a perfect

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getaway and thumbs his nose at them from the pages of his book. For example:

When the night's over . . .
and the lamps outside are dimming to a spark;
when the whole city like an absent-minded
lady in a nightgown seems to have nothing on
as she wanders into the sunlight nearly blinded
it's the police force you depend upon.

The criminals in *The Day's Work* also commit the unpardonable crime of pulling "the biggest cash heist in U. S. history" right from under the noses of the police and getting away with it. To this day the forces of law and order have failed to nab the gang of crooks that planned and executed this amazing half-million dollar armored car robbery two blocks from a police precinct in New York City.

The author uses the facts of this notorious event as material for his story in verse and executes a neatly planned, well-timed literary job. He draws a slyly mocking, humorous portrait of a flatfoot on his beat in the early hours of the morning, and of an habitually suspicious detective:

. . . the dressed detector of the scene,
deponent who observes the world on oath . . .

The world, like a pageant he is paid to see
begins with victual, but is villainous;
this is what makes the world so serious.

The scene in which the leader of the gang meets with his mob to discuss plans for the hold-up and demands a twenty per cent cut of the swag for his commission is rendered in the vernacular of gangsters; probing beneath the trade jargon, it seems more like a parody of a meeting of brokers

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regarding stock deals and commissions. Although Brynes handles the jargon familiarly and appropriately enough, my objection to the use of slang as verse is that it inclines towards rhetoric rather than poetry and tends to read like a lexicon of racketeer dialect.

The description of the actual robbery is lively and has the excitement and immediacy of the tabloid story, but without the strained sensationalism of the press. Lines like the "blind end of a dining car/ where coffee is the color of men's eyes"; "wonder crumbled in chromium and iced with gleam,/ a taxicab swam curbsward like a dream"; and the following passage describing an armored car:

Bumbling like a bug that cannot lift itself
but buzzes instead its wings and crawls forward
winding its weak legs under the burden above—
. . . its gunbarrel sting extended . . .

indicate a latent poetic strength which the author has held in restraint in order to give full play to the action of his narrative.

As an aspect of documentation in recent poetry it should be noted how well the poet assimilates his facts. Apparently he has gone directly to official records and other sources to learn the details of the robbery, police methods, the speech of gangsters, etc. However, he does not present these details like a series of garrulous, didactic items in a document. That method would have seriously hampered his narrative. He has inventively refashioned his material, made fluent use of clipped, everyday speech to quicken the pace of the story, and utilized fictional devices to arouse interest and

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suspense in the reader. The poem moves with the tempo of a fiction thriller.

Although it is a narrative almost bare of nuance and simple and terse in its language, this book has a meaning which the author may or may not have wished to imply. It is the entertaining parable of a successful Jesse James, a big-time, twentieth century, triggered business man; a successful crook in a crooked society. If poetry in general were to approach the level of entertainment of *The Day's Work*, there might be some hope of diverting the book public's interest from the Crime Book Clubs to sampling the thrillers of poetry.

S. Funaroff

ECHO ANSWERS

Year's End, by Josephine W. Johnson. Simon and Schuster.

Here is an angry and rebellious book, religious in its intent with the sort of religion that inspired the prophet Isaiah. The cumulative effect of the volume is didactic, but there are in it many fine lyric passages and sharp images of a quality that suggests close familiarity with nature. The poems depend on this imagery and on intense emotion for their success; they are singularly devoid of certain other ingredients which we have learned to demand, such as subtlety of approach, understatement, delicacy of allusion and economy of phrase. Josephine Johnson can, on occasion, be sparing of her words, but for the most part she uses them like hammer blows to drive home her proposition. Both in

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her method and her conclusion she resembles that son of Amoz who lived in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and the sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with. When ye make many prayers I will not hear them; your hands are full of blood.

That is Isaiah, and *Year's End* supplies the modern version:

Cold Christ, Forgotten Christ. Lamp burning low in a fly-specked chimney;
A monstrous wind of word spoke in Thy name and the world nodding, nodding . . .
And the smell of the mausoleum under the fir and lilies.

What have we done for our children?
We have knitted little jackets for their new-born bodies,
And we have knitted wool socks to keep them warm in the trenches,
Gray-green socks on their skeleton feet.

And where the prophet predicts the coming of a host from afar to overthrow a sinful people, a host "whose arrows are sharp and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted as flint and their wheels like a whirlwind", Josephine Johnson says:

Look down, look down, O little men!
Listen. Lean down and hear
Loud on the wind of death there comes
Cry of the living mouths, the hard
Pound of the living feet on stone, the strong
Beat of the living drums in night.

The parallel by no means ends here. It runs throughout the book and is the more surprising because it is so obviously unintended. It seems to be the result of a similar age, similar conditions and a similar quality of mind. Sympathy and an inspiring example will always do more to re-

form the world than anger and threats, but they are harder to achieve. The easiest way is to call down fire and brimstone on the heads of the thoughtless (and sometimes helpless) offenders. Contemplation of this sort might mar the reader's assimilation of *Year's End* if it were not for the conviction that the poems spring from the sound roots of experience. No one who did not know poverty could have written this book. The intimate details are too starkly told.

. . . their children squirm in shame, wearing old purple coats
cut down
From ragged velvet; stumbling on icy pavements in old opera
shoes,
Tying their stockings with a dirty string.

The dole and the pension; the made job and the forced job;
The basket with the red ribbon and the can of peaches,

And now begins the winter wind,
The long high whistling of the banshee voice
The paper walls that flutter and the stove
Hot in the face, and icy air
Sliding around the blue-white feet.

These and other passages of similar sincerity wring our hearts and tie our hands, for if we cannot give old clothes and baskets to the poor, if we cannot acquiesce in the dole and the forced job, what are we, individually, to do? The answer, with which the book closes, is the answer of a mystic:

There shall be no Kingdom and no Commonwealth,
There shall be no classless state and no abundant life
And there shall be no peace

Until each of us shall have said
"It is I, Lord, It is I!"

J. N. N.

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FUSION AND CONFUSION

The Garden of Disorder and Other Poems, by Charles
Henri Ford. Europa Press

Christopher Columbus and Other Poems, by Sydney Salt.
Bruce Humphries, Inc.

It is regrettable to have to report of Ford's splendid virtuosity that it does nothing so well as seal him hermetically in Ford. "When the trees ride bicycles" is an intelligible enough line (and a representative example of this poet's method of rendering phenomena directly as experience); but others—"if the hunchback hinders the corn's turning yellow" or "Perfume the clock, and the cricket will take care of Aunt Bess"—wrench things a bit too violently out of their dimension. The angle of refraction intelligibility will allow a poet in personalizing experience is debatable. Here, at any rate, it has been exceeded.

These are all excerpts from the title poem, a kind of phantasmagoria where the impressions of a profuse and chaotic material world are presented in a dynamic succession of images, and "things" are rendered as psychic impacts. Ford's technique is thus, in intention, direct—yet the total effect is devious. The poems are often brilliant in disjointed passages, but do not jell. Ford is difficult even to an ear trained to receive images as he uses them—not to "evoke"; not "representationally"; but as subtly connotative elements in a context where tonal and pictorial values are carefully blended. Here is the first part of *Left Instantly Designs*:

Fusion and Confusion

describe the circles
first; terror
will stay and
the moon displace
them and control
the rain;
then walk away
in the rain's disgrace;
the blood's obedience
will follow
instantly designs
left in the sky's hollow;
once fearful often
each ear then
accepts its
rightful coffin . . .

Images shuffled into such arbitrary juxtapositions as often as not miss the highly specialized responses at which they aim. This kind of thing is too vague for good surrealism; it recalls the Objectivists' exquisite weddings of image and cadence, their anxious polishing of "particulars."

Ford probably senses the shortcomings, as he certainly senses the hazards of his idiom. "Imagination's cloak makes us invisible," he says in the title poem. And "dilute the sadistic monopoly's whirlpool that twisted the artist out of all recognition"—a proposition to which the reader, lost in a thicket of private associations, is quite ready to assent. To communicate the insanelly delicate tones of awareness that offer themselves to the poetic impulse, it is hardly enough to set forth the associations and images that supply them in the personal experience, and then to polish these particular effects over and over. Ford's work, indicative through-

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out of strenuous technical application, suffers from his refusal to recognize that metaphor, to function, must be predicated on some reasonably clear referent in mutual experience. It is surprising, therefore, to note his straightforward use of symbolism in *The Bull and the Butterfly*. And *The Jewelled Bat* is a fine example of his ability to sustain heightened imagery. Both of these are from *A Pamphlet of Sonnets*, a collection yielding many rich and intense effects.

However, it is in the group called *Late Lyrics* that he is most communicative, probably because a larger consciousness, a social consciousness, supervenes. Here there is less attempt to dissolve the world in private vision, and more to evaluate it. In such things as *War* and the excellent *Plaint*, we have stuff more comprehensible even as it is more comprehensive. The latter poem is subtitled *Before a Mob of Ten Thousand at Owensboro, Ky.*

I, Rainey Betha,
from the top-branch of race-hatred look at you
My limbs are bound, though boundless the bright sun
like my bright blood which had to run
into the orchard that excluded me:
now I climb death's tree.
The pruning-hooks of many mouths
cut the black-leaved boughs.
The robins of my eyes hover where
sixteen leaves fall that were a prayer:
sixteen mouths are open wide;
the minutes like black cherries
drop from my shady side.
Oh who is the forester must tend such a tree, Lord?
Do angels pick the cherry-blood of folk like me, Lord?

Ford's further development will be interesting to note. In this collection, he has grown better as he has broadened.

Fusion and Confusion

The contents of Sydney Salt's first volume of poems, *Thirty Pieces*, are all included in this new collection. The thing that arrested one in that volume was a concision more often than not attained by a deft play of imagery. Laconic, the poet etched his meaning in miniatures as sure as they were spare. He seemed to use a kind of picture writing, wherein a play of thought was suggested by images always adroitly in the service of concept. In lines like "Now my forest of desire is the leaf of your smile" and "a stream smiling with ocean", from a poem entitled *To Death*, the touch was sure.

In his new poem, *Christopher Columbus*, Salt emerges into something far more ambitious. In *Thirty Pieces* he did try, with less success, a few characterizations—including apologies for Cain and Judas, the former striking a trenchant irony, but the latter falling in execution far short of the profound spiritual paradox it tried to elucidate. In *Christopher Columbus*, however, not only is the characterization understandingly brought off, but there is an occasional pitch of lyric expression to which Salt's early poems cannot be compared. Columbus is made alive, brought down out of the sublimities and absurdities of legend, a lonely dreamer despairing no less than hoping, plagued by misgiving as much as nourished on vision, an adventurer with "that wild knot in the bosom—the lives of men to stain the silk cloth of my dream."

It is interesting, in view of what has been said of the author's earlier work, to notice how Salt handles the climax

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of his poem, the landing:

The natives received us,
nude and poised as sculptures.
Here was the generous and early color of man.
They stood before us in sweet air,
in sweet light engraved.
We were happy as lost children,
these figures of earth silent, immortal witness—
could there be greater hospitality?
We fell on our knees and gave thanks to the Lord,
our voices white, white—
Soon, our visit would be over
our voices turn red

This is extremely quiet writing to climax the emotion, the anticipation, the high lyric affirmations which have gone before; but it is effective because the poet has fallen back on the cameo technique in which he has trained himself. As poetry it is undeniably touching, a successful fusion of thought and symbol. And in the poem itself the reigning in of pace is as effective as it is abrupt—a moment of absolute and quiet vision, the dreamer's intuition, the prophet's reverence. Its reticence is its strongest quality.

Christopher Columbus is almost the only new piece in this new collection, but it gives evidence of a marked advance.

P. DeV.

NEWS NOTES

Since word got abroad that we were planning the present issue, both *The New Republic* and *The New Masses* have devoted special sections to work by members of the Writers' Project, and we are told that one of the large publishing firms expects to bring out an anthology of WPA poets. This is all to the good—however, all this must remain an empty gesture unless it results in more adequate recognition of the poets and in an intelligent use

of the great cultural force they represent. For while we agree that the writing of good books about our states "represents as much creative effort as the writing of short stories, poems, etc." it is nevertheless a fact that, whereas the Theatre and Art Projects have had theatres and galleries in which to show their work, the poets, those who have gained proficiency in the highest literary art, have in most instances been given neither the time nor the opportunity for employing their special talent. To create the assignments and media which will release that talent in the fullest measure and guide it into the most effective channels will be anything but an easy task. Yet it can be done, it is eminently worth doing, and the Arts Projects administration has not shown itself afraid of difficulties.

Though this Federal Poets' Number is the most comprehensive collection of its kind yet published, it is by no means complete. Some poets could not be reached in time, since their connection with the Writers' Project had not been generally announced, or at least was not known to either Willard Maas or ourselves. Others, because of previous commitments, had no unpublished work available. Moreover, an attempt has been made to avoid including too many poems from any one region; so that the choice of material has been necessarily, in some degree, arbitrary. The addition of sixteen pages to our format has proved but a slight advantage, and the amount of good work submitted makes us wish that we had an issue at least twice the ordinary size to devote to it. It should also be pointed out that several well-known poets are represented with brief single entries, by their own preference, in order that more space may be given to younger writers.

We are glad to announce that John Peale Bishop will contribute to our next issue a critical review of the present Federal Poets' Number. This will include a consideration of the other collections and anthologies of Project writers, "an investigation of the character of the work of the new generation, and an inquiry into the value of government support of the poets."

The Harriet Monroe Library of Modern Poetry has been officially dedicated at the University of Chicago, and after a two months' period of cataloguing will be open daily to students and visitors. Occupying a room in one of the finest of the university buildings, the collection consists of about 2300 books, together with the complete file of poets' letters and manuscripts accumulated

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during the first twenty-four years of POETRY. The books are for the most part those which were considered worth reviewing and keeping on shelves in the office. Nearly all are first editions, and many are signed by the authors. They represent only a small proportion of the number of volumes sent in; the collection is therefore a selective one, reflecting the critical standards of the magazine. That this "library of modern poetry" may continue to deserve its title, an anonymous benefactor has provided a fund of five thousand dollars, the interest from which will be devoted in perpetuity to the purchase of new books of verse.

It was fortunate that the task of transferring, housing and arranging the collection should have been undertaken personally by Dr. M. Llewellyn Raney, Director of the University Libraries, one who has a keen and sympathetic appreciation of contemporary literature. No more attractive setting could have been found than the room provided in Wieboldt Hall. This room contains shelves which are capable of holding several times the present number of books, and there are also special display cases for letters and manuscripts. Surmounting the shelves on one wall is a replica of the bronze tablet which has been placed on the grave in the Andes, bearing the inscription:

HARRIET MONROE

POET

FRIEND OF POETS

BORN CHICAGO — DECEMBER 23, 1860

DIED AREQUIPA — SEPTEMBER 26, 1936

Here, in this large bright room overlooking the Midway, poets and poetry have been given literally "a place in the sun."

The dedication took place at an informal dinner on the evening of May 24, given by the Friends of the Library in Hutchinson Commons. Lloyd Lewis presided, and Sterling North introduced the speakers. The collection was presented by the editor in behalf of POETRY and accepted by Vice President Woodward of the University. Carl Sandburg spoke in memory of Harriet Monroe, recalling "a slight woman physically, a little frame but a very peculiar power. The years passed and in a certain sense she was a house of many doors—all humanity could come in. She had an acquaintance with many very real poets, some of whom the hand of the potter shook in the making. She knew where they had created realities and she became familiar with where they merged on madness, and she loved them for all of that. She had something that strangely catholic character Charles Lamb had."

Ford Madox Ford, also speaking in a vein of reminiscence, brought tribute from poets abroad, and concluded: "The passing of Miss Monroe's splendidly obstinate and determined figure has, I can assure you, left a sense of loneliness to many poets, and it is a sense of loneliness that will not too soon be dissipated."

The main address of the evening was given by Archibald MacLeish. This was in substance the essay it is our privilege to include in the present issue. When MacLeish finished, the great audience rose to its feet in spontaneous tribute. His speech, delivered with ringing effectiveness, was later characterized in *The Courier* as "one of the high moments in the history of the University." After the long applause had subsided, Dr. Raney read messages from poets on both sides of the Atlantic. An impressive conclusion to the program was supplied by William S. Monroe, well-known engineer and brother of POETRY's founder, who stepped forward to read a clause from Harriet Monroe's will relating to the establishment of a five-thousand dollar prize fund. The award will be made to an "American poet of distinction, or of distinguished promise" whenever the interest from this fund accumulates to five hundred dollars. The jury will consist of three poets, preferably from different parts of the country, to be appointed by the president of the University; and the will specifies that "in making awards the committee shall give preference to poets of progressive rather than academic tendencies."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KENNETH FEARING, of New York, is a leading figure in the new poetry movement. He appeared for the first time in POETRY in 1927, and is the author of two books of verse, *Angel Arms* and *Poems*. A new volume of his work will be published in the fall by Random House.

WILLARD MAAS, who served as an auxiliary editor for this issue, is the author of *Fire Testament* and a frequent contributor to periodicals. A new book of his poems, *Concerning the Young*, is announced by Farrar and Rinehart. He lives in New York.

DOROTHY VAN GHENT is working for her doctorate at the University of California. She has contributed poetry and criticism to *The New Masses*, *The Southern Review*, POETRY, etc.

ALFRED HAYES, one of the outstanding younger poets, is on the staff of the Living Newspaper Theatre and has appeared in various

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magazines and anthologies. With Leon Alexander he dramatized Erskine Caldwell's *Journeymen*, which was produced on Broadway last season.

RAYMOND E. F. LARSSON, since writing the poem in this issue, has left the San Francisco Writers' Project to become a newspaper editor in Clearwater, Fla. He is the author of several books, including *O City, Cities!*, and has just completed a long "ballet in verse" which he is adapting for radio.

WILLIAM PILLIN, a prominent younger poet and the recipient of our 1937 Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize, is at present a member of the New Mexico Writers' Project, living on a farm at Santa Cruz.

MARK TURBYFILL, of Chicago, needs no introduction. He is the author of several books of poems, including *A Marriage with Space*, and in 1926 received our award of honor, the Helen Haire Levinson Prize.

JAMES DALY was on the Writers' Project in San Francisco when the poem in this issue was written, but has now returned to New York. He is the author of two highly praised books of verse, *The Guilty Sun* and *One Season Shattered*. His group of poems in our March issue won enthusiastic comment from readers.

HELEN NEVILLE, of New York, has appeared in many magazines, including POETRY, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Partisan Review*, etc.

MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD, of San Francisco, is well known as a contributor to magazines, and as the author of several biographies. She has appeared often in POETRY since 1915.

HAROLD ROSENBERG was editor of the "American Stuff" issue of *Direction*. His verse and criticism have been published widely.

S. FUNAROFF, also familiar to our readers, is the author of *The Spider and the Clock*, announced for publication by International. He has been doing motion picture research work on the New York Writers' Project.

VIRGIL GEDDES, well-known as poet and playwright, is a member of the editorial staff of the Writers' Project in the Washington office. He has appeared before in POETRY and is the author of two volumes, *Forty Poems* and *Poems 41-80*.

HARRY ROSKOLENKO, of the New York Project, has contributed to *American Stuff*, POETRY, *Pagany*, etc., and was represented in *The Best Poems of 1937*, edited by Thomas Moulton.

MARGARET WALKER, a young Chicago writer and graduate of Northwestern, was introduced to our readers last November. She is now writing a novel based on Negro folk-lore.

Notes on Contributors

KENNETH REXROTH, of San Francisco, is one of the best known of the "Objectivist" poets. He has appeared frequently in *The New Republic*, *The New Masses*, etc., as well as in *POETRY*.

CHARLOTTE WILDER, now resident in New York, was for six years associate professor of English at Smith College. She is the author of a book of poems, *Phases of the Moon*, and in 1936 was co-recipient with Ben Belitt of the Shelley Memorial Award.

H. R. HAYS, also of New York, has appeared several times here as poet and critic. He is the author of a play in verse, *The Ballad of David Crockett*, a new production of which is being planned by Burgess Meredith.

LOLA PERGAMENT was born in New York City, attended Washington University in St. Louis, and now lives in Atlanta, Ga. She has published in many magazines, including *POETRY*.

SEYMOUR GORDEN LINK, another familiar contributor, has had a varied career as teacher, editor, and journalist. He is at present a supervisor on the Nashville, Tenn., Writers' Project.

The following poets honor our pages for the first time:

WELDON KEES, now living in Denver, was for fourteen months an editor on the Nebraska Writers' Project. He served on the staff of *Midwest* and has contributed verse, stories, and criticism to periodicals.

STERLING A. BROWN, now on leave from Howard University, is serving as editor on Negro affairs for the Writers' Project in his native city of Washington. He is the author of *The Negro in American Fiction*, *Negro Poetry and Drama*, and of a book of verse, *Southern Road*, published by Harcourt, Brace & Co. His poem in this issue will be included in a forthcoming second book, *No Hiding Place*.

MELVIN G. SHELLEY is a supervisor on the New York Writers' Project. He has contributed criticism to *Creative Art* and verse to *Transition*. His first volume, *Mr. Silver and Other Early Poems*, will soon be published.

CHARLES HUEBURG moved recently from Tennessee to New York. He was one of the poets included in *Trial Balances*, and has appeared in *The Nation*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Alethis*, etc.

NORTON KRIEGER, now employed on the Chicago Writers' Project, was born in South Dakota and spent his high school and university years in California.

LAWRENCE ESTAVAN is a native of Louisiana living in San Francisco. He worked for nine years on the staff of *The Chronicle*, joined the Writers' Project in 1935 as editor of the San Francisco

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Guide, and is now supervisor of the Theatre Research Project.

With the exception of Mr. Maas and Mr. Funaroff, none of this month's prose contributors are Writers' Project members, though ALFRED KREYMBORG held an administrative position for several years on the Federal Theatre Project. He is the author of many books and plays, including the recent full-length radio verse drama, *The Planets*, which was broadcast over the NBC network on June 6th. An introduction is equally unnecessary for ARCHIBALD MACLEISH, whom many consider the most gifted poet of his generation. His latest volume is the stirring *Land of the Free*, a book of photographs with a "sound track" of poetry. MALCOLM COWLEY, an editor of *The New Republic* and author of the widely-known memoir, *Exile's Return*, has come of recent years to be known chiefly as a critic and commentator. He is, however, the author of an important book of poems, *Blue Juniata*, published in 1929 by Cape and Smith. JOHN WHEELWRIGHT, of Boston, is a well-known contributor of verse and criticism to POETRY and other periodicals. He conducts the "Poetry Noon" program over WORL, on Mondays at 12:15 P. M. His novel in sonnets, *Mirrors of Venus*, will soon be published by Bruce Humphries.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

The River, by Pare Lorentz. Stackpole Sons, New York.

New Poems, by W. H. Davies. Bruce Humphries.

Full Circle, by Carla Lanyon Lanyon. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford, England.

Fair Captive, by Angela Marco. Stephen Daye Press, Brattleboro, Vermont.

Characters in Cadence, by Louise Morey Bowman. Macmillan Co., Toronto.

The Ring and the Tree, by Sylvester Baxter. Bruce Humphries.

Le Poème de l'Atlantique, by Armand Godoy. Editions Bernard Grasset, Paris.

PROSE:

The World at My Shoulder, by Eunice Tietjens. Macmillan.

England's Musical Poet, Thomas Campion, by Miles Merwin Kastendieck. Oxford University Press.

[Remaining books will be listed next month.]

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POETRY will continue to publish the work of well-known established poets as well as the most interesting younger writers on and off the Project.

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Read and discuss the following important prose features:

Kenneth Burke: A Review of John Crowe Ransom's *The World's Body*

Ezra Pound: An Essay on Poetry and Musical Form

Lawrence Leighton: A Review of Empson's *English Pastoral Poetry*

Yvor Winters: A Revaluation of the English Lyric (In Two Parts)

Gladys Campbell: An Essay on Image and Thought in the Lyric

S. I. Hayakawa: An Article on E. E. Cummings

Samuel French Morse: Reviews of Spender, MacNeice, and Prokosch

N. B. POETRY for August will contain a critical review of the present Federal Poets' Number, together with a consideration of the other special collections and anthologies of WPA writers, by John Peale Bishop.

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● Among the 1938 "events" have been: A complete 15,000-word story, *From a Japanese Prison*, by Kensaku Shimaki; a complete novella by Richard Wright, author of *Uncle Tom's Children*, winner of Story Magazine's national prize contest for W.P.A. writers; a Federal Writers' Issue, edited and written by over twenty writers of the Federal Writers' projects.

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The Pegasus on the Cover by Eric Gill

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LII

NO. V

AUGUST 1938

FOUR POEMS

I

WHEN all my five and country senses see,
The fingers will forget green thumbs and mark
How through the halfmoon's vegetable eye
In the ten planted towers of their stalk
Love in the frost is pared and wintered by,
The whispering ears will watch love drummed away
Down wind and shell to a discordant beach,
And, lashed to syllables, the eyed tongue talk
How her sweet wounds are mended bitterly.
My nostrils see her breath burn like a bush.

My one and noble heart has witnesses
In all love's countries, that will watch awake;
And when blind sleep falls on the spying senses,
The heart is sensual, though five eyes break.

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II

O make me a mask and a wall to shut from your spies
Of the sharp, enamelled eyes and the spectacled claws
Rape and rebellion in the nurseries of my face,
Gag of a dumbstruck tree to block from bare enemies
The bayonet tongue in this undefended prayerpiece,
The present mouth, and the sweetly blown trumpet of lies,
Shaped in old armor and oak the countenance of a dunce
To shield the glistening brain and blunt the examiners,
And a tear-stained widower grief drooped from the lashes
To veil belladonna and let the dry eyes perceive
Others betray the lamenting lies of their losses
By the curve of the nude mouth or the laugh up the sleeve.

III

Not from this anger, anticlimax after
Refusal struck her loins and the lame flower
Bent like a beast to lap the singular floods
In a land without weather,
Shall she receive a bellyfull of weeds
And bear those tendril hands I touch across
The agonised, two seas.

Behind my head a square of sky sags over
The circular smile tossed from lover to lover

Dylan Thomas

And the golden ball spins out of the skies;
Not from this anger after
Refusal struck like a bell under water
Shall her smile breed that mouth, behind the mirror,
That burns along my eyes.

IV

The spire cranes. Its statue is an aviary.
From the stone nest it does not let the feathery
Carved birds blunt their striking throats on the salt gravel,
Pierce the spilt sky with diving wing in weed and heel
An inch in froth. Chimes cheat the prison spire, pelter
In time like outlaw rains on that priest, water,
Time for the swimmers' hands, music for silver lock
And mouth. Both note and plume plunge from the spire's
hook.

Those craning birds are choice for you, songs that jump back
To the built voice, or fly with winter to the bells,
But do not travel down dumb wind like prodigals.

Dylan Thomas

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THREE POEMS

MIDSUMMER NIGHT

Midnight, and a tigerish sky
In whose wild wide lovely flank
Throbbled one planet and the moon:
Two golden holes, two wounds gone dry.
Not of these would the night die
That ranged so beautiful and rank
Above us. Yet it must die soon.

Gone, it cannot shine again.
The dark bright fleece will heave no more,
Scattered, beyond human chart.
Nor ragged stripe nor spark remain
Of all that glory and that pain.
Can a dead night find claws to score
The living heart?

TRURO HOUR

Carved by the silence, clean as rock
The moors lie open to the sky.
Each bearded dune stands like a stock
In early nudity.
No shadow stirs, to crack the spell
Cast by the heat upon this waste

Babette Deutsch

That shows the candor of a shell
To heavens as bare, as chaste.
Alone coarse beach-grass, shaggy pine
Find sea-grudged root beneath the sand,
And stubborn as the wind, define
The salt lagoon from the salt land.
White as the surf, white as the sun,
The cottages cling sleepily
Each to its hillock, one and one,
Like sea-fed gulls beside the sea.
Between its knees this naked place
Holds the strange peace that is assured
To those who smile in their embrace
At violence dreaded or endured.

AT THE CAPE

Why should eyes used to moving
Along the printed page, or down
Anonymous black streets,
Rest on this place?
What love, clean of man's grieving,
Is featured in the sand's blank mobile face?
What solace springs from rage
Embraced by hunch-backed trees?
Now all is hot and still
As though the sun had withered the sea-wind,

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And the vague sky gone blind.
A peace no page can teach,
Unreached by the crowd's hate,
Shines from this shore.
So, once, a wayfarer,
Sea-stripped, basked in the sun.
Deep in his briny beard
He smiled at fate.

Babette Deutsch

SONG FOR A NIGHT

Lover of beauty in an hour
Of cold night dew and colder star,
Watching the evil dark devour
All that you longed for, all you are—

When shall the lark again betray
The impulse quickening at the heart,
The joy no other lips could say,
It was so shining and apart?

Better to lie with stricken breath
Deep in a darkness without end
Than walk so steadfastly with death
One can but treat it as a friend.

Carl Edwin Burklund

THE WHALE

The spirit of a man should never fail,
But, like the whale
Who at the shark's assault swallows her young,
Should rescue its convictions; she'll then sail
Stately in tempestuous waters, all among
Her foes, until where peace is
Her paunch-protected children she releases.

Nor does the whale despair when from a distance
She sees a feeble flopping on the beach
And knows it is her child. She brings assistance,
Spouting unstinted volumes when at reach,
And down the child will slide
(A stranded hulk refloated by the tide),
To find again a shelter by the mother's side.
And when at last,
Worried by shoals, herself has run aground,
The savage mob dischunk her all around,
Leaving the ruined fabric of that vast
Vault to the eager builders.

But, they say,

In houses of whalebone
No dreams have they
Save of perpetual drowning to a low moan.

Terence Heywood

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TWO POEMS

HAVING TALKED WITH MEN

Having talked with men from everywhere,
I cannot say what brings them to this town.
They walk the streets, are hungry for an hour,
and stay or leave, according to the man.

They answer midnight with a question, knowing
the question of reply before they bow
or shrug the answer, tacitly allowing
to be what will be, inevitable and slow.

Carelessly they so preserve the dream
that whoever will may find here in a glass.
They know who they are, perhaps, but who I am
or what I cannot tell, save one of these.

WITHIN THE HOUSES, LOVE

This was an afternoon of simple music
and intricate attitudes that could be struck
when following the street or the prosaic
falling of an angle of our luck.

Life lurked in the most expected places,
wherever the bar held empty seats; desire

James Boothe

was obviously grown bright within the houses
till midnight fell in the gutter, love for hire.

The pornographic landscape was not clear,
was dimly read and never understood
beyond the occasional closing of a door
and darkening of a window. Life was good
and so remains—we seek it anywhere.

James Boothe

HOMER

You look over the human sea, out and back as far as you can, and you reach the first poet, the last poet of the other side of the page—Homer, who wrote the last poem of someone arriving at where he ought to be. Odysseus set out from Troy to find his way home. And he arrived. He came. Twenty years it took, and the poet could have dropped him anywhere en route, among the Sirens, or in the witch's cave. But he followed him over all the human and inhuman seas, until he walked into the hall where the suitors sat before his wife Penelope, the last poem of the last poet who brought the poem to its human home, and the first poet to be.

Walter Lowenfels

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FOUR POEMS

STORM

A vessel is breaking in half under the headland.
The ocean is swollen with storm and the lives
Of the drowned men. Foam drawn over them.

Above my left eye a pain burrows.
Conspirator, awaiting dangerous weather,
If I were there, you would be suffocation,
Pain and the ocean obliterating each other.

The radio brings Bach from Philadelphia.
Closer within than sickness and outside death,
The well-plumed music drives beyond the lighthouses
Toward the extreme coastland—

ἀπὸν πρὸς ἐσπέρου θεοῦ.

On our beaches

Dead sea birds under yellow curds of foam.

REMARKS ON POETRY AND THE PHYSICAL WORLD

After reading *Ash Wednesday*
She looked once at the baked beans
And fled. Luncheonless, poor girl,
She observed a kind of poetic Lent—

Mary Barnard

And I had thought I liked poetry
Better than she did.

I do. But to me its most endearing
Quality is its unsuitableness;
And, conversely, the chief wonder in heaven
(Whither I also am sometimes transported)
Is the kind of baggage I bring with me.

Surely there is no more exquisite jointure
In the anatomy of life, than that at which
The poem dovetails with the inevitable meal
And Mrs. B. sits murmuring of avocados.

THE TEARS OF PRINCESSES

The tears of princesses were cool as rain.
They wept purely into their unbound hair.
Tears were ornaments to be hung
At the pale eyelid like jewels
At the coral lobe of the ear.

Princesses had long beautiful names
And they always cried with perfect reasonableness
For lasting sorrow or bloody-hilted
Abhorrent wickedness
Presented at the unguarded breast.

THESE ARE ALSO LIVING

After the dreary walk and the tinsel city
That thrusts its tongue hollowly into the night;
After the crowded streets and the tenement houses,
Where the lost and the dying flash mocking eyes
With indelicate movements, waiting for death;
After the flight of water-soaked steps and dark halls,
The uneven door and the cold room above the stairs,
The anger in your face settles down—suddenly—
Your lips tremble as we look into the street below,
Where hungry men are passing into the night, moving
Close to the buildings for warmth and comfort.
These are also living men, thrown as we are thrown
Into the troubled room of earth, crying for bread.
Their continuous procession into the dark streets
Lifts a stabbing arrow of pity, striking your eyes,
Pushing a nervous wave through your rain-soaked body.
Why are you sobbing profusely? We too are hungry.

Carlos Bulosan

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FOUR POEMS

TO RISE

The heart knows more
than the mind can tell.
It sings itself
out of a well,

where it has fought
in bogs of doubt.
It hears wings beat,
lets itself out.

What dares to sing
without words, has power
to rise like hope,
faith, sun, and flower.

OF ONE UNWED

Her coming is a shadow,
beautiful and still,
light as dawn creeping
over the hill.

Her passing is an early
violet that leaves

Joseph Joel Keith

earth and air fuller.

Love alone grieves

for singing that is singing

of one unwed.

Lord, must he remember

that she is dead?

THE SISTER OF WITCHES

Though words are witches' tongues, they do

not lash as hers whom hell has sent :

the evil wench of silence who

is cruel, cold, and eloquent.

THE FARMER

The farmer fills his pipe and lights it.

His dinner was good ; he frees the belt-buckle.

He sees the colt race with its mother.

He sees the calf suckle.

The farmer knocks out burnt tobacco.

He puts a cold cup to his mouth.

He cuts another path with Dobbin ;

forgets last summer's drouth.

Joseph Joel Keith

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TWO POEMS

HELL, SAID THE DUCHESS

Hell, said the Duchess, and her voice was hard,
What's the world coming to, I'd like to know?
Mutton is up a penny, rents are slow,
Butter's so dear we'll soon be using lard.
Months have elapsed since I have held a card
Higher than six or seven; and my toe
Is sticking through my stocking. What I owe
Causes them sleepless nights at Scotland Yard.

Politics gives me twinges in the head;
Half of the world is bellowing for war,
And half is—Well, at least here comes the tea.
Just one more rubber, then a spot of bed:
I can't think when I've had so poor a score—
And you, sir, take your hand from off my knee!

TO WICKY: MY WIRE

Where the dog goes there go I:
To the laurel bush we hie,
To the elm and maple tree,
To the oak, with *bel-esprit*,
Fall and summer, airily:

Airily, merrily do we skip now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

Grove and coppice we espy:
To the greenwood grass we fly,
Thicket, spinney, scrub and fern,
This way—that way—see us turn!
What's the difference to him?
Life's a dog's life, life's a whim,
Under the blossom-laden limb.

Willow, chestnut, poplar, beech:
Stout lad! lead the way to each,
While I follow, follow, follow,
Like a wheeling, reeling swallow.
Fate's a fiddler, life's a dance,
Life's a trail of circumstance,
Life's a timber-strewn expanse.

Ash and aspen, birch and pine,
Sapling, creeper, bush and vine;
Park and pasture, furze and brake,
Our appointed way we take:
Morning, noontide, and at night,
With dispatch and with delight,
These our duties we recite.

Trunk to trunk and bole to bole,
And the last tree is our goal.

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This is life, lad—*c'est la vie!*—
Searching out the final tree.
Where you stand and misdemeanor
Blossoms thrive and grass grows greener,
And the very air is keener.

Ave, Wick, three-legged dog,
Tilted now beside your log!
Time and change can nothing show
That you don't already know.
All the wisdom of the past
And the future comes at last
Back to earth, and, by the rood,
I admire your attitude!

Vincent Starrett

MISGUIDED

Forced down by Time in nose-spins of activity—
a moral obligation reconditioned as nerve-spasm—
he lost the larger rhythm of things that could be
and dropped the future into the sick past's chasm.

The blown mist of his hollow outside world
froze ferny crystal creepings on his vision
and, as the tentacle ends of his mind incurled,
discounted his reality's excision.

So, through successive swift vacuities
he sought to sting with labor into fact,
he came to death as one that fights yet flees,
because of what he did not know he lacked.

Frederick Mortimer Clapp

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NANTUCKET SOJOURN

RETURNING

Surely so sweet a land will call to us
Over and over in years to come, but you
Say no, there are so many places to visit,
You never return—so many islands even—
Bermuda, Sea Island, Catalina, Hawaii.
That is the difference between us. I shall come back,
Pick wild flowers on the moors, and watch the shore birds
Chasing the last wave, fleeing before the next.
I shall walk the single path along the bluff,
And missing you ahead, fancy you follow.
I shall sit beneath the lighthouse, when the beams
Whirl over sounding chaos, straining to hear
Your words above the wind, but they will be lost.
I am always turning back, trying to catch
A bird already in the blue, to pluck
The petal freshly fallen. Well I know
Nothing can be recaptured, it is waste
To make a pilgrimage while there remains
An exploration; but I am bride to Lot—
I must have my backward look though the heart is salt.
This is but one in a sea of many islands:
Only the foolish steer to one light, the wise
Hail it and pass. You will be sighting always
Your brighter land ahoy, while I am swinging
Idle at anchor in this gray port we loved.

Mary Finette Barber

SURVIVALS

It is a wonder anything at all
Can bear this rhythmic weight of wind and sea.
Whatever does, has wrought its own defenses.
The swallows parry with keen blades, the gulls
Match it with motion, wing for wave, and creak
To its own raucous cry. Thistles endure,
Moor scrub with hard red berries, Queen Anne's lace
And any thin-stemmed blossom that lies prone
Beneath the wind's will when it has its way,—
And men with heart to spend their bridal nights
In the new house built with a "widow's walk"
Already on the roof, and sail at dawn
Because the clamorous passion of the sea
Cries louder and lasts longer—bony men
With wind-seamed faces and dim eyes that seek
Horizons still. Nantucket has its old—
Houses and men—and it has many women
Who have no cause again to shade their eyes
On wharf or widow's walk, but keep within
The tight grey houses set with bric-a-brac.
"Martha crotcheted that doily; William brought
This china Boy-Blue home from his last sail—
His next to last." How can so small a thing
Quiet the heart against this bombing wind,
This cannonade of surf pounding ashore
Tidings they will not lift a pane to hear?

Mary Finette Barber

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THREE POEMS

O IDIOT HEART

These fish devouring fish devouring fish,
These birds engorging birds, beasts killing beasts,
These worms that ravage the living and the dead,
These visionless innumerable fangs
That throng air, sea, flesh, very rock,
These should rebuke your imbecile delight.

These men maddened with tasteless gold, these races
Furied with fear, these nations frothing and poisoned
With hate, this acme of life deadlier than all,
Crueller than any beneath, these drip despair.

O idiot heart, to hide behind desire
And sing of pool-eyed love, soft-fingered peace

HAVE NO FEAR

Have no fear, beloved,
The world is fair and good;
None will crush your mind if it
Be hollow, as it should;
None will ever tear your heart
Unless it harbor blood.

John Russell McCarthy

When the chase is over
And the dust is red
One will live forever,
White and garlanded,
In the hearts of two or three,
Not yet quite dead.

FRIENDSHIP BROKEN

Confused and driven in a place bright,
black, big, these two daringly seemed
almost to understand; their awareness caught
at each other like whirling midges and clung:
their clinging governed somewhat the whirl, assured
the laughter, fogged the terror.

Suddenly a wrong
turn breaks the grasp; these two eddy
apart bewildered, rubbing bruised hands;
even they add anger to the confusion and the drive
endlessly impelling.

Soon the power, finishing
with these two awarenesses, will drop them as bird lime
for the chaste resolvment of worms:

Can a stone know

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(hurling finally with its planet into
the gas maw of a star) that the frightened ephemera
which once it was, clinging through a few
earth-spins to another frightened ephemera, created
a soft grey beautiful nothing called friendship
which might well be the heart of a more enduring universe?

John Russell McCarthy

IT STOPPED TICKING

It stopped ticking—clock I had not heard—
And silence was a shock,
As if a bell had struck, as if a bird
Had cuckooed out an hour—
And more significant than any
Measured by a clock,
As if a boat were gliding toward a dock
With engines still,
Or ear, new buried in the ground,
Intensely was aware
That it was silent there
And that all other silence was a sound.

Margery Mansfield

BATHER SLEEPING

Across the silken couch of sand
She lies for earth to understand,
The burnished blessing of her youth
Upon her forehead like a hand ;

For since the sun has held her close
And loved her much, she is of those
Lured into gold along their limbs
Where once were ivory and rose.

She sleeps in amber. She is one
With this bright beach she gleams upon,
The strong waves leaning toward her mouth,
The lusty opulence of sun.

And where is magic that may tell
The sweet and fiery dreams that fill
The satin blood, the slumbering bone,
The muscles musically still.

She must not speak. She is remote.
She is a poem summer wrote
And left where aching sand and wind
Might whisper to her lovely throat.

James E. Warren, Jr.

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SUNKEN REALMS

I

Forty fathoms beneath
Sea water lies Lyonesse,
Where Arthur met his death
In war for man's distress.

In the Battle of the West
Falling to Mordred's sword
The land became his breast,
The sea the land's reward.

Over those waters poise
Calm halcyons, nor cry;
They hear the sea's deep voice,
Their mood is memory.

For hope that has been drowned
These birds wheel round and round;
For faith that has been lost
Their wings are tempest tossed.

They mark the traders' hulls
Sailing above the sites
Of cities, pursued by gulls
They struggle for the heights.

Edgar Lee Masters

Mons Badon's bloody field
Grows tangles of deep sea weed.
The Virgin on Arthur's shield
Still drives the race to bleed.

That Arthur is not revered
Who singed the Saxon beard.
His quest of the Holy Grail
Survives in many a tale.

His actual sword is gone,
But the waters of the mere
Hide not the gems which shone
On the brand Excalibur.

II

After Atlantis, long
After King Arthur's wound
America suffered wrong,
And half its realm was drowned.

Sunk fathoms below all eyes,
Unsung of the Muse's mouth,
Who now can lyricize
Lee's lost and ruined South?

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All that it has bequeathed
Is sorrow, its domain
Is but a whisper breathed
On seas made dim by rain.

The Wilderness, Gettysburg,
Cold Harbor, Fredericksburg,
Like Lyonnesse are names
For futile battle fames.

While noble lives and faiths
Of the South are vanished wraiths;
While laws of a sovereign state
Lie crushed beneath the fate.

Who will undo neglect,
Revoke the tragedy?
What hands can resurrect
Lyonnesse from the sea?

How is it that great lands
Become but realms of grief,
Untended by faithful hands,
Unhelped by great belief?

What god of power and truth
Can bring to life the South?
Yet it shall keep a grace
Till men forget Lee's face.

Edgar Lee Masters

Naught but this face is left,
His eyes of patient care,
Who saw his land bereft,
With never an answered prayer.

But he whom nothing daunts,
Who keeps till death the trust,
Shall shine above the vaunts
Of Fortune and its dust;

Though a tide of sorrow runs
Above the Southern hills,
Beneath a sky that chills,
Where fly the halcyons;

Though sunken, forgotten, grown
To just a word alone
For tragedy, till it stirs
Some hand to epic verse.

Edgar Lee Masters

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THE FEDERAL POETS' NUMBER

THERE is no such thing as pronouncing final judgment on any poet. For all that he had, while still living, drawn the shroud around his head and closed his eyes for the sculptor to set his simulacrum in death, have we not seen, in our own time, John Donne stir? Three hundred years to the day after he died, I was in Saint Paul's looking for his tomb. I asked any number of men who seemed to belong there where it could be found: no one knew. Donne's statue was beside the altar; the lineaments composed for eternity had, I suppose, changed as stone changes after three centuries. Presumably that was not much. Donne's poetry was, as everyone knows who cares to know such things, undergoing considerable change. It had been discovered to be, not only alive, but subtly and sensually so; the Dean was dead, in fact so utterly dead that the attendants in his own cathedral had not remembered, if they had ever seen, his name under the statue posed on the urn. But the poet was at that moment being made over into a contemporary.

We have had three hundred years to make up our minds about Donne; and we have not yet done so. One thing only is settled: that he was a poet. And Ben Jonson, who thought him "the first poet in the world, in some things" already knew that much.

I have had three days to make up my mind about the poets who appear in the last issue of *POETRY*, chosen from among those who have worked under the Federal Writers'

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Projects. Both the editor and I thought we had so arranged things that I should have the better part of a month to consider this anthology. Because of circumstances which neither of us could control, the July copy of POETRY reached me only three days ago. I have, however, read the other anthologies which in *Direction*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Masses* have been made from the work of these poets. Some of the names were until then unknown to me. I have done what I could to repair my ignorance. Some of the names which appear in these other collections are not represented in POETRY; I shall ignore them in what follows, for, although none of them is unknown, I do not think their omission any great poetic loss. It is at once obvious that the collection in POETRY is far and away the best that has been made from the work of the Project poets. I do not say this simply as a compliment to the editors, though it is one. I suspect, if their showing is better than any of the others from the same sources, it is because they were not moved, in the selection, by extraneous considerations, such as the political complexion of the poets. They have admitted both the pallid and the rubicund. They have not thereby made my task any easier. For what I should like to do, what I had hoped to do when I undertook to comment on the collection, which I knew to be made up from poets who are young, was to discern their directions, to make out, if I could, what moved them. So far, I have used the word poet as editors use it, for anyone whose work is clearly not prose whom they have decided to publish. I had also hoped,

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using the word as a moment since I used it for Donne, to find out if there were any poets among them.

Willard Maas, who was one of the editors of the anthology, has told us "that these poets, with few exceptions, have been forced to qualify for relief in order to obtain their present connections with the Federal Writers' Project." He has taken over the official way of putting it, which is a nice way of saying that they had to declare themselves destitute as men before they could receive support as poets. This was humiliating—how humiliating one of the contributors to this collection, Alfred Hayes, has shown in his *In a Home Relief Bureau*, published in *The New Masses*. But to go into the matter of federal aid to poets would not only take me far, it would take me away from the particular task I have set myself. And besides, it has already been dealt with in the July number by those who through experience are more competent to deal with it. On that score let me merely say that the aid was given; that, because it was given, some writing was done that would not have been done without it; and—which is most important in the present state of the world—whatever was written as poetry was written without the imposition of official opinion on the poet. Whatever has been written has been freely written.

These Federal Writers have not only looked on the actual world. They have been caught up in it, no less surely than the conscripted soldier is caught and confined in a uniform. I find none who has not heeded the first part of Mr. Macleish's counsel to the poet; and there is none who has not,

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within his powers, tried to create, through poetic statement, a "poetry native to the actual world." Now all of Mr. MacLeish's essay was stirring, but not all of it was new; and this particular counsel, it seems to me, I have been hearing for some twenty years and more. The fault in that counsel is this: that while it takes courage to look at the actual world, it is a courage that can be found by the will. But to do more than look, to see; to see more than another, and in particular to see more than the journalist sees, or the historian is likely to discover; to see what is dying, what dead, what living, what coming to life—that requires something more than the determination to stare, the resolution and the strength to keep staring. It takes more than speculation in the eyes to see. And yet it is precisely this seeing that is of avail to poetry. And because it is very rare, poetry is rare. In the meanwhile, we do what we can; we use what we have learned of the poetic craft to record what we have to say, or think we have to say. And we console ourselves by hoping that it may have a certain value as writing, even though its values may not be those of poetry. And it is also true, as Mr. MacLeish implies, and as I have said elsewhere, that too fine a pursuit of purity, whether in poetry or morals, leads to sterility. There is always the example of Mallarmé to frighten us.

In the matter of craft I cannot discern much that is new. And this is important; for a genuine advance in craft always means a change in sensibility. I can only conclude in this respect there has been no great change in the gen-

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eration of the depression and the preceding one. Let me take, simply for convenience, the first four poems. First, I shall take *A Little Nightmusic* of Alfred Hayes, for although it is not printed first, it can well stand foremost as a point of reference. Mr. Hayes is a Communist poet; he has been associated with the Living Newspaper Theatre; he lives in New York. So that he might be supposed to be in touch with whatever is latest and to represent whatever is most advanced. But listening to his *Little Nightmusic*, it is impossible to hear anything which is politically an advance on T. S. Eliot's *Preludes* and *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*.

I do not know just when these poems of Mr. Eliot's were written, but they are already in the *Ara Vos Prec* volume, which came out in 1919; and I suspect they were written some time before that. I am not saying that Mr. Hayes has nothing of his own; he has; I am merely saying that technically he stands very close to the early Eliot, just as James Daly, in *City*, is doing as a craftsman the sort of thing Cummings was doing fifteen years ago. Mr. Larsson does show an advance, and happily the person on whom he has advanced is himself. He has, I should say, more clearly than most others in the issue, a style; but he has had longer than most of the others to acquire and perfect a style, for he has been writing since the years immediately after the war. And the qualities which his poem on the war in Spain show are exactly those qualities he has always been ready to show, but which now are more admirably displayed than before.

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He has asked me not to comment on the present poem, which is not here exactly as he would have it; but I must refuse his request, simply because *Compline of the Men of Peace*, with its repetitions and contrasts—the men of peace contrasted with the men of war; the metaphors repeated but altered, like musical phrases transposed into another key—seems to me the best thing he has done. As it stands, it avoids the poet's worst fault, which is diffuseness. And I hope he does nothing to change it, except to remove the special marks of attention which he has placed around the word Spain, which needs none.

I have kept back Kenneth Fearing, though he has, and because of his tone, I think rightly, the first place in this anthology. He, more than any of the others, has something new, though it is not altogether easy to say briefly what his technical contribution is. What immediately strikes one is the sense of foreboding, which is conveyed by a series of images so spare that his speech seems almost abstract. Whatever is seen is surely, but not clearly, seen, for it is scarcely caught sight of before it has dissolved into something else. It is by this means—reminiscent of nightmare—that he convinces us what he is telling us about, with such hints and indirections, is something that is like an end, and yet may never end. This, surely, is a poetry of the depression. And I should like particularly to note that the quality of the depression is rendered to us not so much by what he says, as by his manner of saying it. He does not need the emphasis of capitals. But is it for emphasis that he

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has used them in this poem? Are they not rather reminders of all those dictates that continually assail us from signboards, which seek to impress by the enormity of their print, while they admonish us that only by doing what they say can we escape the feeling of fear? And all the time the aim of the signboards is to stimulate fear. Who can say that Mr. Fearing's name has not entered his writing? So far, he has been limited to this one effect; but that he carries off extremely well.

What are these poems about? Well, there is no doubt that most of them are concerned with the actual state of the world. They know a world in which there is war and rumor of war. Even Willard Maas's *Journey and Return*, which goes into the country of memory, after recounting much that was desirable, must in the end record:

And the naked trees in the dark
Cry out with dreams before we awake
With machine guns mounted on the window sills.

It is a world in which the actualities are hunger and greed, ignorance and protest, deprivation and doubt. Daring is praised; and the downtrodden are urged to rise. There are those who care; there is the man whose conscience stirs when walking in the lazy air, knowing there has been another raid in Barcelona; there are those who do not care, "those who turn guiltily in their sleep." Mr. Funaroff's tribute *To Federico Garcia Lorca* says what he started out to say. But I cannot but feel that most of the poets of social protest look faint under the weight of their subjects. Their cries are like those we try to make in sleep, when

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the anguish is real, but sound will not come.

It is because he keeps within his compass, his subject limited, not only to what he knows, but also to what he knows he can do within the range of a country ballad, that Sterling Brown's *The Young Ones* is more effective than, say, *Summons at Night* of Virgil Geddes, or *The End of the World* of Harold Rosenberg.

Mr. Maas is not a poet of protest, nor is Charles Hudeburg; both seem to me poets. Since they are, their work deserves a more careful analysis than I can here give it. Mr. Hudeburg seems to me to promise more than any other poet whose name was not known to me before reading these anthologies. But if he is promising, he is also troubling; as in Hart Crane, there are hints in his poems of something held back, of something obscured. And I would rather reserve comment on him until I have seen more of his work. So must I, too, with Kenneth Rexroth, whom I admire, but whose contribution to the Federal Poets' Number I cannot understand nor place in relation to other poems of his I have seen.

I have written more than I intended and said less than I should. I have had to pass over a number of names simply from lack of space. And even where it has been possible for me to comment on a poet, I do not pretend that I have said the last word — not even that I have said my own last word. And certainly if he is really a poet, the last word will not be mine, but time's.

John Peale Bishop

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IS INDEED 5

NO MODERN poet to my knowledge has such a clear, child-like perception as E. E. Cummings—a way of coming smack against things with unaffected delight and wonder. This candor, which results in breath-takingly clean vision, is a quality he shares with William Carlos Williams, just about equally, although, to be sure, Williams is not child-like. No modern poet, furthermore, is less self-important than Cummings—none so delicately shy about asserting his will upon others. These are not, so far as I am aware, the customary opinions of his work, but if one keeps his attention for a time strictly upon the lyrical verses in the *Collected Poems*¹, without permitting himself to be startled or shocked (and therefore sidetracked) by the typographical fireworks or the satire, he will find qualities in Cummings' poetry that are reminiscent of nothing so much as a sensitive and well-mannered child. (The number at the end of each quotation indicates the number of the poem in the volume.)

Always before your voice my soul
half-beautiful and wholly droll
is as some smooth and awkward foal
whereof young moons begin
the newness of his skin.

[15]

i am a beggar always
who begs in your mind
(slightly smiling, patient, unspeaking
with a sign on his

¹*Collected Poems*, by E. E. Cummings. Harcourt, Brace & Co.

breast
BLIND) yes i
am this person of whom somehow
you are never wholly rid . . . [171]

This lyrical impulse is quiet, pure, and innocent, so that few people have written better poetry for children than Cummings has.

little tree
little silent Christmas tree . . .
who found you in the green forest
and were you sorry to come away? [104]

Leave him alone, and he will play in a corner for hours, with his fragilities, his colors, and his delight in the bright shapes of all the things he sees:

some ask praise of their fellows
but i being otherwise
made compose curves
and yellows, angles or silences
to a less erring end) [185]

The important point about E. E. Cummings is, however, that he was not left alone. He was dumped out into the uninnocent and unlyrical world — the world of chippies, broads, and burlesque shows such as are discovered by Harvard undergraduates “seeing life”—and after that into the infinitely more shocking world of the blood, vermin, murder, commercialized idealism, and patriotic hysteria of the Great War. Cummings wrote about these two worlds (which frequently merge into each other) his fiercest satirical verse. His lyricism, shy enough at best, ran completely for cover, and he turned upon the nightmare worlds of reality partly with the assumed callousness and defensive

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self-mockery of the very sensitive, and partly with the white and terrible anger of the excessively shy.

The self-mockery that served to conceal his innocence and lyricism (principally from himself, one suspects) begins to find expression toward the end of *Tulips and Chimneys*, and recurs in his poetry throughout the rest of his work. Poems of this kind, dealing principally with prostitutes, yeggs, and perverts, are, like his play *Him*, powerful, phantasmagoric—as if the poet, having left his fragilities behind him, were exploring with unfeeling but lively curiosity a nether world peopled by hideous automatons. There is in these poems none of the sentimentality in reverse that made the “scarlet woman” and disreputable hang-outs the subjects for delicious shudders among the fin-de-siècle poets. Cummings’ inferno is the accurate record of an incredulity that was compelled to accept, against the testimony of every innate sense of reality, the world as he found it to be.

when you rang at Dick Mid's Place
the madam was a bulb stuck in the door.
a fang of wincing gas showed how
hair, in two fists of shrill colour,
clutched the dull volume of her tumbling face
scribbled with a big grin. her sow—
eyes clicking mischief from thick lids,
the chunklike nose on which always the four
tablets of perspiration erecting sitting . . . [37]

the words drizzle untidily from released
cheeks “I’ll tell duh would; some noive all right.
Ain’t much on looks but how dat baby ached.”
and when i timidly hinted “novocaine?”
the eyes outstart, curl, bloat, are newly baked
and swaggering cookies of indignant light. [122]

We have his detailed testimony as to the nature of the suicide part of him had to commit before all this could be accepted:

the mind is its own beautiful prisoner
Mine looked long at the sticky moon . . .
then decently hanged himself, one afternoon . . .
the last thing he saw was you
naked amid unnaked things. [188]

Now and then, however, the world offers a situation which overcomes his indifference—and when this happens Cummings condenses such pity and terror into a sudden stanza or turn of phrase (all the more terrible because unexpected) that the reader is taken with a quick, sharp thud, right in the pit of his consciousness. These (perhaps involuntary) revelations of his carefully concealed ethical passion—not frequent, but frequent enough so that we know they are not accidental—constitute an unobtrusive claim by which we are compelled to grant that he has written some poetry that we cannot call anything but great. The famous Good Samaritan incident of the abandoned drunk—a poem which moves with a furious rush of pity, scorn, and horror to a terrifying climax—contains such a revelation. It is, perhaps, the best of all his poems.

Brushing from whom the stiffened puke
i put him all into my arms
and staggered banged with terror through
a million billion trillion stars. [142]

Anger is the central passion of his war-poetry—the white anger, as I have said, of the excessively shy. Although many have already conceded his *Enormous Room* to be one of the

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greatest war-books, only few have as yet realized that Cummings has written what are certainly our greatest war-poems. Some of them, to be sure, are wry, grotesque whimsicality in the midst of death, such as 148 (the "etcetera" poem), and 151 ("look at this/a 75 done/this"). But such poems as 149 ("come, gaze with me upon this dome/of many colored glass, and see") and 204 ("i sing of Olaf glad and big/whose warmest heart recoiled at war") are written in an intensity of angry scorn that would be, in anyone else's hands, hysterical, but in Cummings is handled with a calculated reserve that holds the feelings, surely though dangerously, at an almost intolerable pitch:

our president, being of which
assertions duly notified
threw the yellowsonofabitch
into a dungeon, where he died

Christ (of His mercy infinite)
i pray to see; and Olaf, too

preponderatingly because
unless statistics lie he was
more brave than me, more blond than you.

E. E. Cummings' descent into Hell is a trip from which he has not come up. He is still there (or here). Perhaps there is no coming up if, as Eliot has said, in prose one may be concerned with ideals, but in poetry one deals with reality. The brilliant mind that early took refuge in sophistication is now profoundly sophisticated (if this is not a contradiction in terms—one cannot say urbane, because he cares too much). All along he has had the habit of occasionally gathering together fragments of his inferno and weaving

them into patterns of surprising lyric grace—as in 69 (“little ladies more/than dead exactly dance/in my head”). More frequently in his recent poetry he seems to be returning, although with elaborate precautions lest he be caught acting like a softie, to his naturally tender delicacy of sentiment—his almost sentimentality. But,

along the treacherous bright streets
of memory comes my heart, singing like
an idiot, whispering like a drunken man
who (at a certain corner, suddenly) meets
the tall policeman of my mind. [184]

That mind is one that has been compelled to tragic adjustments.

Perhaps this fact explains the eccentricities of his technique. Partly they are a disguise—a man so sick of the “poetry” and rotten idealism of his time, a man so acutely aware of the ludicrous figure presented by people with beautiful souls in a world of brutes and slobberers, is forced if he is most indubitably a poet to present an exterior that will make it impossible for anyone to think of him as a “poet” as commonly understood. The painful, sardonic humor of 123 shows this process in operation. He deliberately drives away as many “poetry-lovers” as possible—the entire “literary” world of facile emotions. To these people he has nothing to say, preferring to be regarded, as he usually is by academic and journalistic reviewers alike, as plain nuts. Thus Mr. Cummings is sure that those who come to him, those who have been willing to force their way through the barbed-wire entanglements of his syntax and typography, are friends.

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"The poems to come," as he says in his introduction, "are for you and for me and are not for mostpeople.

"—it's no use trying to pretend that mostpeople and ourselves are alike . . . You and I are human beings; mostpeople are snobs." It is no use either trying to pretend that it is Cummings who is the snob, for he is attacking the snobbery of the right-minded, than which there is no greater or more harmful snobbery.

. . . may i be wrong
for whenever men are right they are not young. [312]

Another reason for his technique is his attempt, perhaps illegitimate, to represent by words and typography experiences *just the way they happened*, without regard to the formalities or the "laws" of thought. This results in the most daring of his technical innovations:

n(o)w
the
how
dis(appeared cleverly) world
is Slapped:with;liGhtninG
! [221]

sh estiff
ystrut sal
lif san
dbut sth
epoutin (gWhono:w
s li psh ergo
wnd ow n, [262]

These are probably "not poetry", but I am not sure that this matters greatly, since they succeed eminently in doing what they set out to do. Mr. Cummings is not interested in the "legitimacy" of his experiments.

Can one say, following current critical fashions, that Cummings is up a blind alley, and so saying dismiss him as a left-over from the futilitarian twenties? This is not to ask whether he has said all he is capable of saying. The question is whether the exercise and discipline of our sensibilities to which his poetry submits us are still useful. If we find that they are, it is merely churlish to complain that he is no "fructifying force". His profound scepticism is regarded now, of course, as "dating" him. I am not at all sure that this is a fault in him—for his scepticism is of a kind that ought not to be lightly abandoned. His is not the easier way.

But one can make too much of his scepticism and scorn—for nineteenth century critics of Swift are not the only ones who can make the mistake of reading satire without seeing behind it the convictions out of which the satire arose. There is no excuse for missing these convictions in Cummings, for he makes them explicit:

King Christ, this world is all aleak;
and life preservers there are none:
and waves which only He may walk
who dares to call Himself a man. [258]

I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing
than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance. [315]

The sum-total of such beliefs in Cummings comprises, I am sure, the absolute minimum of conviction with which a poet can do business. But these are things which need to be said over again by every generation in its own idiom, and Mr. Cummings has done right well in his.

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The only regret about the *Collected Poems* is that Mr. Cummings did not see fit to collect all his poems. The omissions are few, but some, in my opinion, are important. The difficult typographical job which this volume represents has been excellently handled by Robert Josephy, who ought to be given a medal.

S. I. Hayakawa

REVIEWS

PROPHECY AND FACT

Trial of a Judge, by Stephen Spender. London: Faber & Faber.

IT IS difficult to write about *Trial of a Judge* with only the text as a guide; the critic may consider the work as poetry, purely and simply, or he may hazard a guess as to its dramatic virtues and defects, if he chooses to treat it primarily as a play to be produced in the theatre, but certainly, without the reinforcement of witnessing an actual performance to aid him in clarifying his statements, he will have more than a little difficulty when he comes to fuse his remarks into a criticism of the play as poetic drama. There is, too, the further obstacle set up by the divergence of *Trial of a Judge* from other recent verse-plays. {Like *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, *The Ascent of F 6*, and *Out of the Picture*, *Trial of a Judge* is a political play with a moral,} but Spender is not having a holiday; there is no joking and no

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mockery. Spender makes use of a chorus, it is true, but he divides his action into five acts in the traditional Elizabethan manner, and he has relied far less on tricks and a fertile imagination for brilliant mechanical devices than Auden and MacNeice have done. This is meant neither as praise nor condemnation; it is merely an attempt to isolate Spender from his competitors in the same field.

The play verges on the historical.¹ Although the scene of the action is not definitely fixed, it is quite certain that it is Germany at the time of the collapse of the democracy and the rise of the Nazi state. It makes no difference that the Nazis wear black uniforms instead of brown. Briefly, *Trial of a Judge* is the story of a man who has condemned five Fascist party-members to death for the murder of a Jewish intellectual, Petra. His action is the mainspring for the rise of the Fascist power; in an hysterical attempt to preserve the democracy, Hummeldorf, a weakling minister, and the wife of the Judge, bitter, half crazed by hate and fear of the post-war world in which she lives, prevail upon the Judge to retract his sentence. But in his desire for perfect justice, the Judge demands that an equally harsh sentence which he had imposed on three Communists for having wounded a policeman while defending themselves, be lifted, and that they be freed as well. Since he has resigned his post, this action makes him a traitor to the Fascist cause, and when he witnesses the terror and chaos of the Fascist monster, and demands the arrest of the murderers of Petra's brother, he is thrown in prison and held for trial. Hum-

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meldorf now becomes judge, an old man in fear of the Fascists, humiliated, made to sentence another who has been his friend; but disgusted and sick at the vulgar farce of the trial, he himself falls a victim of the Aryan myth. The death of the Judge, of Hummeldorf, of Petra's fiancée is merely the prelude to a greater slaughter.

Instead of creating his own framework of legend as he goes along, as Auden and Isherwood do, Spender works with a ready-made pattern. It is to be expected that certain gains will emerge from this procedure, and it follows inversely, I think, that something will be lost. The surface excitement of an Auden play is missing, the dénouement of the events themselves can be predicted as soon as the plot progresses far enough to show the drift of the action; but being less concerned with plot, the poet must necessarily define his characters and his language more sharply.

It is here that one of the major difficulties of the play arises. Spender's unwillingness to present the conflicting ideologies with anything more than the most barren sympathy for one side over another has led him into making his play a vehicle for the struggle between Fascism and Communism. The Judge, however, who is the central pivot on which the action turns, is a living character in bold contrast to the other characters, the wife of the Judge, Petra's brother, Petra's fiancée, and Petra's mother. The balance is upset, the abstract and the human refuse to knit. The passionate objectivity is marred by the intrusion of the Judge; the morality that the Judge represents further mars

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the politics in the abstract.

This twofold intention leads into still other complexities which prove fatal to the play's complete effectiveness. The resolution of the play is the triumph, temporary as it may be, of Fascism. When, at the end the Chorus of Red Prisoners says

We shall be free
We shall find peace,

Spender is pitting words against accomplished fact. It is the same predicament that confronts the hero of *Bread and Wine*, when he sees that the revolutionary movement in Italy has gone to pieces because there is no effective way to combat fact with promises which remain words. Spender lets his prophecy be the hope, but the hope is nearly futile. Yet the grimness of *Trial of a Judge* is preferable, I think, to a manufactured piece of fiction.

The final weakness in the structure seems to lie elsewhere, however. Spender certainly conceived his play fundamentally as a poem, and paid too little attention to the actual drama of his situation. The device of giving titles to the separate acts, the thematic repetitions, as, for example, the echoes of the speech of the Judge in the first act which occur in Act IV, and the long, unbroken passages, almost soliloquies, are either too subtle (or, at times, too obvious) in reading the play, and would prove in production to be simply excuses for mannerisms unless varied with great skill. The drama and the poetry separate too easily.

But the poetry itself has much. Certainly *Trial of a*

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Cut at the steel rails of suburban lines.
Like rusting cogs, the tanned, naked unemployed
Lay on canal banks bathed in sun's white wilderness.
In cafés, in darkness, in tenements, in slums, at street corners,
Voices grew sharp as knives and lives cut their moorings.
Violence and riot flowered. But now all that is ended.

The violence which will "burst over Europe as a bomb" is established. It is not difficult to imagine that the scene of the Judge's trial is close to the truth. In spite of many weaknesses (and this brief essay seems to have been devoted chiefly to the weaknesses), *Trial of a Judge* is certainly the most moving and richest attempt yet made by the younger poets in a field which has been lying fallow for almost three centuries.

Samuel French Morse

AN INTELLECTUAL POET

Said Before Sunset, by Frederick Mortimer Clapp. Harpers.

For the subtlety and brilliance of their intellectual concepts, for their varied, particular originality of form, Frederick Mortimer Clapp's poems deserve to be much better known. And the present collection (his fifth) merits a much less trite and inept title. As in *New Poems* and other volumes, in *Said Before Sunset* Mr. Clapp continues his comment upon certain contemporary matters. He views the social scene with a detached, though somewhat acid eye, preferring, like Robinson Jeffers, to stand apart from political controversy, from the "explosive mixtures" of doctri-

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naires, the drift toward false dawns. He advises poets to "serve no icing," and not to scuff their bright boots "on the strewn stones of war or peace or policies or creeds." Mr. Clapp is content to throw the burden of proof upon history.

His real interests lie in a consideration of mind and spirit under the impact of modern cultural or scientific achievement. He goes after verities with the skeptical, searching mind of the scientist; he turns sardonically from the material and mechanical to honor mathematics in its purer forms. The titles of many of the poems—*Grey-matter and Salt-flats*, *Marginalia at Zoo*, *Force-enslaving Tricks*, *Shampooing Blame*—reveal the stimulating nature of his viewpoint and interests. Sensitive modifications in accent or rhythmic emphasis enable him to achieve, within the framework of conventional metrical forms, a highly individual tempo comparable to the innovations of modern music. He understands well the relationship between music and mathematics; his thought finds best expression in a pattern or formula worked out in concise, geometric terms. Readers accustomed to poetry scaled to the more familiar images and incidents of common experience will find much of this difficult at first glance. It is true that the diction is not always simple, that the phrases are frequently overburdened with abstract, heavy-syllabled words. But, when writing at his best, Mr. Clapp uses strikingly new and apt figures. With a feeling for texture and movement that reminds one of Hopkins, he sees the waterfall "crinkly like sheer stuff pulled over a

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glass bar, in leaf-shaken streaks of sun." And such a poem as *Subjective Time* indicates not only his care with metrics, but his ability to treat an abstraction in memorable visual terms.

Time the obsession, the immense stone,
poised upside down like the mirage of a mountain on itself,
peak to peak at dawn, its roots entangled in the grave-yard of
the stars,
trembles above shadow valleys destitute of being,
trembles, the creeping spectre of the mind
enmeshed in a feeble lattice-work of veins
on a grey slime's contorted folds. This alone
is the dead centre, this creeping of Time, this clutched and empty
pelf
of passion reverberant to the impotently beaten bars
of consciousness—grim fallacy concealed in the persuasion of
seeing
and dayless deception of the light-struck blind
brief in an unchanging universe of interwoven strains.

Ruth Lechlitner

TWO ANTHOLOGIES

American Naval Songs and Ballads. Edited by Robert W. Neeser. Yale University Press.

Voices from the Fields: A Book of Country Songs by Farming People. Edited by Russell Lord with an Introduction by Carl Van Doren. Houghton Mifflin Co.

These two books of verse are a complete contrast to each other. In one point only are they alike: they are both the products of singers who make their songs because they want to; because, very likely, they cannot help singing. But, spon-

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taneity apart, there is little to be said either for or about the first volume, other than that it is a carefully edited compilation, covering slightly more than a hundred years, from the American Revolution to the somewhat arbitrary date of 1882. These songs and ballads are Americana rather than poetry. (You know the sort of yo-heave-ho thing I mean.) They are difficult to read, because, whatever their date, they are all exactly the same; soon enough, with the best will in the world, the attention wanders, the eyelids flutter, and boredom sets in.

Voices from the Fields, on the other hand, are Americana, but poetry as well. This little anthology has a curious origin. It is a book of poems sent in during the last ten years by readers of one of America's oldest farm papers, *The Country Home Magazine*, established at Springfield, Ohio, in 1877 as *Farm & Fireside*. Since 1930 the editorial offices have been in New York, but the million and a half subscribers this magazine strives monthly to please are still drawn from the rural population all over the country. In 1927 a contributors' column was started, *The Forum*, edited by Russell Lord, who is also the editor of the present collection. Each column is headed by a poem, sent in by some reader of the paper, and *Voices from the Fields* is Mr. Lord's selection of the best of these contributions.

There are fifty-three farmer-poets represented, many of whose poems are accompanied by biographical notes by Mr. Lord. The fiction-writer's imagination cannot fail to be quickened by some of these case-histories, which supply mate-

rial for an agricultural novel of a new and agreeable kind. There is Ben H. Smith, who grows strawberry plants in southern Illinois, and likes it; W. W. Christman, who died in 1937, after seventy-two years spent happily tilling the acres in New York state he inherited from his father and raising a bumper crop of nine children; Alta Booth Dunn, who lives on a ranch in the far west and refers to herself gaily as one of "us old cowpunchers"; Brother X., a young country schoolteacher, who found peace as a monk in the Catholic Church; Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey, the chatty, cosy wife of a farmer in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri; the late Herbert Rittenburg, a hired man in Virginia, who did chores for his keep and whose tones are the most touching of all the *Voices from the Fields*.

As one turns over the leaves of this unpretentious sheaf of lyrics, the strongest impression one receives is that of cheerfulness. On the whole, in spite of a melancholy note here and there, these men and women are happy. They like being farmers. The land that they till is indeed "the good earth" to them. They say so, over and over again, compensating for a certain awkwardness of approach and triteness of phraseology by the sincerity of their feeling. These fifty-three farmer-poets are not afraid of the obvious—are unaware, probably, that it *is* the obvious—and therefore they frequently transcend it to achieve a real and living beauty. I should like to quote something from each of the outstanding poets in the group to illustrate my meaning. But, as space forbids, I shall close with a sonnet, the last

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poem in the section by Mr. Christman, who seems to me, all things considered, the finest craftsman of them all.

The gift of rest be with you where you lie
Under the weeds and grass and the wild rose,
Or where steep acres run to reach the sky
And everlasting and heath aster blows.
Moss pink and blue-eyed myrtle thatch each shed,
Cover with beauty every house of peace
Where you who fell on sleep lie long abed,
Eternity the limit of your lease.

Peace be upon your houses! when you went
We grieved, we felt the bitterness, the lack,
Then softly fell the evening of content—
The world had changed, we would not wish you back.
Now peace be in your houses! soon we too
Must lay aside our work and rest with you.

Arthur Meeker, Jr.

NEWS NOTES

A delightful and authentic voice is lost to modern American poetry with the death of John V. A. Weaver, which occurred on June 14 in Colorado. He is best remembered for the racily colloquial note struck in those poems collected in his first book, *In American*, and various succeeding volumes. H. L. Mencken's studies in the American language had inspired "Johnny" to the belief that good poetry could be written in slang, and he set his hand to it. His first efforts won the enthusiastic encouragement of Mencken and others, and the monologues and lyrics that continued to flow from his pen found the Muse tossing the lingo of the pool-room and the soda-fountain with no sacrifice of poetic dignity. His use of ball-pitcher and salesgirl slang was not a stunt, as performances in the colloquial so often are; it avoided the self-conscious and artificial " quaintness" of most dialect poetry and was as genuine as it was racy. Some of our readers will remember his early appearances in *POETRY*, beginning in May 1918.

Among many comments we have received on Delmore Schwartz's article, *Ezra Pound's Very Useful Labors*, only one accuses the author of not showing sufficient admiration for his subject. This

is from John Drummond, of Rapallo, Italy, who writes: "Mr. Schwartz's title suggests a picture of Mr. Pound as a sort of laboring Hercules, which might be all very well if his article itself (in your March issue) substantiated it, but actually he seems to stick at depicting little more than a 'literary gent.' True, there is mention of his 'quasi-editorial activities', and blue-pencilling early Hemingway MSS. must have been a tough job, but 'one who has devoted himself almost wholly to literature', or 'the pure literary man, the complete man of letters', does not sound very herculean, does it? . . . He pictures Mr. Pound being preoccupied with *how* things are said, whereas the Cantos are no less important for *what* things are said. If we rescue Mr. Pound from the unfortunate literary pigeon-hole in which Mr. Schwartz has absent-mindedly placed him, and read the Cantos as the work of an author who is not a specialist, but who has sought to erect a hierarchy of cultural values from all times and places, we will perhaps appreciate them more as a whole, and, not surprisingly, draw somewhat different conclusions about certain passages. . . . Matters mentioned in the Cantos become "news" in the press several years later. . . . Thus the machinations of Sir Basil Zaharoff were recorded long before the appearance of the sensational biographies. . . . And, to come nearer home, Canto XXXVIII, published four years ago, contains the lines:

'And that year Mr. Whitney
Said how useful short sellin' was,
We suppose he meant to the brokers
And no-one called him a liar.'

The Lyric, our Virginia contemporary, devoted its spring issue to a special British number containing interesting poems by C. Day Lewis, Walter de la Mare, Siegfried Sassoon, Ruth Pitter, Wilfrid Gibson, V. Sackville-West, L. A. G. Strong, and others, and a critical essay by Geoffrey Johnson. An all-Virginia number is being prepared for the autumn.

Two radio programs in honor of our July *Federal Poets' Number* were recently broadcast over stations WNYC and WQXR. Amy Bonner was guest announcer on both occasions, and the poets who spoke and read were Willard Maas, Charlotte Wilder, S. Funaroff, and Helen Neville.

The complete collected poems of William Carlos Williams will be published in the fall under the imprint of New Directions. The same firm will publish an American edition of Charles Henri Ford's *The Garden of Disorder*, reviewed in our July issue by

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Peter DeVries. A caravan of *American Writing*, edited by Ben Field, Richard Wright, Prudencio de Pereda, and S. Funaroff, is announced for fall publication by the Critics Group, 96 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. C. This will be devoted solely to fiction and verse. Payment will be made for manuscripts, and the work of younger writers is particularly welcome.

A noteworthy collection of ancient Egyptian art work, poetry, narrative, proverbs, letters, etc., has been made available in *Never to Die*, edited by Josephine Mayer and Tom Prideaux, and published by the Viking Press. This brings together in non-academic fashion the most significant and illuminating material yet unearthed in the effort to throw light on the somewhat phantasmal Egyptian. Much of the poetry is worth reading for its own sake. The volume is as good-looking as it is informative, a successful achievement in presenting "The Egyptians in Their Own Words."

Samuel French Morse has been appointed American Editor of London's *Twentieth Century Verse*, the small but excellent twice-quarterly edited by Julian Symons. The magazine is planning an American number, and contributions from this country should be addressed to Mr. Morse at 237 Locust Street, Danvers, Mass.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

DYLAN THOMAS, whose work William Empson calls "the most exciting development in English poetry during the last few years", was born in Swansea, South Wales, in 1914. He has published three volumes (*18 Poems*, *25 Poems*, *The Burning Baby*) and is perhaps the best known of the surrealist poets writing in English. An American edition of his poems will be published this year by New Directions.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS' most recent book of verse is *The New World*. He will contribute to our next issue a review of Eunice Tietjen's autobiography.

MARY BARNARD is a native and resident of Vancouver, Wash. In 1935 she received our award of honor, the Levinson Prize.

BABETTE DEUTSCH, of New York, is a regular contributor to POETRY. She is the author of several books of verse, *Fire for the Night*, *Epistle to Prometheus*, etc., and of the critical study, *This Modern Poetry*.

FREDERICK MORTIMER CLAPP is a well-known art authority and director of the Frick Collection. He has published five books of poems, including *Said Before Sunset*, reviewed in this issue.

Notes on Contributors

TERENCE HEYWOOD, who was introduced to our readers in April, was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1913, and educated at Malvern and Oxford. He is at present studying at Upsala University in Sweden, and writing a book on Sweden.

MARY FINETTE BARBER was born in Greenwich, N. Y., and now lives in Chevy Chase, Md. She has contributed frequently to POETRY and other periodicals.

MARGERY MANSFIELD, of New York, was formerly a member of our staff and is the author of *Workers in Fire: A Book about Poetry*.

CARLOS BULOSAN, a native of the Philippines, sends us his new poem from the General Hospital, Los Angeles. An interesting account of his life will be found in our February 1936 issue.

JOHN RUSSELL MCCARTHY, of California, has contributed often to POETRY since 1914. His most recent book is *For the Morning*.

CARL EDWIN BURKLUND, who was introduced to our readers in 1931, lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.

WALTER LOWENFELS, of New York, is the author of *Episodes and Epistles, U. S. A. with Music, Finale of Seem*, etc., and of the recently published *Steel 1937*.

The following poets appear here for the first time:

VINCENT STARRETT, of Chicago, though perhaps best known for his mystery novels, is also an authority on Ambrose Bierce and has written several books of verse, including *Ebony Flame*.

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH is a native of Pennsylvania but has lived for the past fourteen years in Hollywood. He has contributed poems to many magazines and is co-author with Kathleen Sutton of a novelette in verse, *Through Many Doors*.

JAMES WARREN, JR. was born in 1908 in Atlanta, Ga., where he still lives. While attending Emory University, he served as editor of the *Emory Phoenix*. He has contributed to *The North American Review*, *The Seawane Review*, *Voices*, etc., and was the winner of this year's first prize of \$100 given by the Poetry Society of America.

JAMES BOOTHE was born in Sweetwater, Tex., in 1918, and has just finished his junior year at the University of Southern California. His work has appeared in several magazines and anthologies.

All but one of this month's prose contributors have appeared previously here.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP, the distinguished poet and novelist, now lives in South Chatham, Mass. His most recent book of poems is *Minute Particulars*. S. I. HAYAKAWA was born in Canada of Japanese

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

parents. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, where he has been a member of the English faculty for the past eight years. SAMUEL FRENCH MORSE is at present doing graduate work at Harvard. He is American Editor of the London periodical, *Twentieth Century Verse*. ARTHUR MEEKER, JR., of Chicago, has contributed widely to magazines and is the author of several novels, including *The Chalet* and *Vestal Virgin*. RUTH LECHLITNER's book of poems, *Tomorrow's Phoenix*, was recently published by the Alcestis Press

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Selected Poems*, by John Gould Fletcher. Farrar & Rhinehart.
Fantasia, by Wade Oliver. Mosher Press.
Dawn is Forever, by E. Merrill Root. Packard & Co., Chicago.
Testament, by Martha Wilson. Richards, London.
Selected Poems, by Edwin G. Burrows. Press of Jonathan Edwards College, New Haven, Conn.
The Old House Remembers and Small Town Portraits, by Constance Deming Lewis. Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Texas.
Higher Realms, by Paul Falvury. Libri Catholici, London.
Highland Lore and Legend, paraphrased by Ian Malcolm. Macmillan Co., London.
Violet Rays and Other Poems, by Olive Allen Robertson. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
Gossamer'd Glory, by Ida Elaine James. Poetry Publishers, Philadelphia.
Walk the Earth, by Ruth Anderton. Priv. ptd., New York City.
Within the Crucible, by Sophie Himmell. Wings Press, New York.
- PROSE, TRANSLATIONS, AND AN ANTHOLOGY:
Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Edited by Claude Collier Abbott. Oxford Univ. Press.
Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry, by Christopher Caudwell. Macmillan & Co., London.
Poetry and Crisis, by Martin Turnell. Sands; The Paladin Press, London.
The New Ireland, by J. B. Morton. Sands; The Paladin Press, London.
Lost Angel and Other Poems, by Pedro Salinas. Translated by Eleanor L. Turnbull. The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore.
The Poetry House Anthology. Edited by Michael Everett. Poetry House, N. Y. C.

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The Pegasus on the Cover by Eric Gill

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LII

NO. VI

SEPTEMBER 1938

FIVE POEMS

COUNTRY MIRACLE

AS I came over the rise by Stewart's ash
In the evening early, and caught sight of home,
I stopped two fields off, seeing what I saw:
The Hustons and the Cosmos in such bright
Concatenation as had never been,
Ten odds to one, since first there was a Huston.

In the empty sky above the open hill
A cockle-shell of cloud the length of the roof
(No other in the whole sky anywhere)
Hung low above the old bright lamp-lit house
That rayed out yellow light from every window.
It was the kind of cloud angels would crowd on

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In an old painting—Giotto knew the kind—
More raft than cloud; it barely cleared the chimney,
Cusped with a crescent moon, pranked with a planet.

Incredible juxtaposition, stylized, fleeting!
I never saw so pointed a fable, so narrowed
A doing of nature's, as that night I saw
(So pointed a fable, with so hid a meaning):
Forefathers' roof, cloud, moon, and Jupiter
Whirled in together for a moment of time
In the enormous scheme, to whirl apart forever.

—Why single out the Hustons, why stoop down
Thus to their hill-head, take their roof for a
measure?
If chance had done this thing, then chance was greater
Than I had any idea of, more to be feared.
Not that it happened on the billionth cast,
But that I saw it, made the miracle;
Whether a hall-mark of authentication
(And seals are made of elements as simple,
Earning significance from neighborhood),
Or a wild throw of the dice that turned up doubles
Before my startled eyes, one thing was certain:

Abbie Huston Evans

No Woodward, Jones or Baker could have seen
What I saw plain. It was a sight for Hustons.

Pulled in by taut wires—man, moon, cloud, and planet
(Man the last comer by the tick of a heart-beat)—
We met, blind allies punctual to the minute,
As I came over the rise by Stewart's ash.

SLOW GAIN

The silky sweetness of a full-blown thistle
Is arrowy, goes in deep,
Turns to felt truth, a latter-day Epistle,
Becomes a Law to keep.

Aprils lived through, Julys and fierce Decembers,
Let down a silt, a dust
Of gold, like brooks. — Truth lodged thus in our
members
Is the truth to trust.

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FIRST NIGHT OF FALL
(Hunter's Hill)

Earth might look like this to an angel flying over,
Twice as deep-seen, bright-seen, as our eyes are used to.
Doubtless hills the Flood drenched looked so that first
summer!

Through the air of crystal, see the end-on corn-field
Twisting up the steep slope like a Roman ribbon,
And the killed fir, singled by the low sun, kindling
At the bottom of the crimson on the eastern shoulder.

Across a field of shadow to a hill of brightness
Looking mortal-eyed for a deathless minute,
Chill rising round me, dahlias marked for dying
In a rank before me, soon to be cut off,
I, till now immortal, know all in a minute
How short the shift of life is, how sharp the knife is
whetted.

TIME'S CITIZEN

Do things matter still?—They matter.
Cut-shape, color, chime.
By felt things I know I am
The citizen of Time.

Abbie Huston Evans

Such all but fingerable life
Lies in no doubt at all;
Tied to the stem, I am a leaf
Secure against the fall.

When the day comes I no more flinch
At dawn's edge coming on,
Staggered as by the ice-cap's shift
I'll know that Time is gone.

TO A FORGOTTEN DUTCH PAINTER

The wheat-straw hangs down broken; the nicked leaf
Deploys on air; the snails drag shells like trinkets;
And Master Fly sits in his spot of sun
Upon the yellowing leaf. — This tells me all.

You are a poet, for you love the thing
Itself. In twenty ways you make me know
You dote on difference little as that which sets
Berry apart from berry in the handful.
—"How singular is nigh-identical!"
You cry to dullards; given eyes, we see
The split pod or the briared vine house contraries

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Narrowly opposite in a tent of sameness
(Not one but has its urgency upon it).
—"In deep, at the pith, where life makes push, it sits,
The I, the me, the myself, of the cherry,"
You say so plain that I can never doubt it;
—"Sit down before a clover-head," you say,
"As if it were a city to be taken.
Invest it round. There is but little hope."
—"The poppy-seed is a commodious place,"
You urge, and prove it; I behold for you
The negligible ort assume its state
And bridle like a girl looked on with love.

Though all must be whelmed under, yet on the brink
These keep a slippery foothold for a while;
Safe still your darling seed-wafts, drupes and umbels.
Your purpling gooseberry hung by a hair
Has faced down doom; doom looked twice, and went
by. . . .

The thing loved well carries the mark upon it.
It outbeams radium. And time lets it be.

Abbie Huston Evans

SEASCAPE

Soon will the lonely petrel
Bank upon my thought
And I shall watch again
Him lay a wing against the heart.

Ocean-shirker land-shorn
Sinewed on headlong air
Shall flaunt his flight mnemonic
To my solid flesh, my fear

Oh then, as he, claim ocean,
Parallel the thunderous wave
In mad heroics make
O my soul your glorious leave

Now as this bird
The wilderness of ocean
Wings, one with prophetic
Joy, the midnight's acclamation!

Oh suddenly! or I
Within my fearful thought
Oh I shall know, shall know
Love lay a wing along the heart.

Ralph Gustafson

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

POEM

For Herbert and Marjorie Mallalien

Sitting in the garden where the shadows waver
I imagine myself a hero, a martyr or sea-rover.
Out of a world of clocks and trains
My office-troubled fancy turns
To the pretty mental photographs the dull laugh over.

Sitting in the garden I am one of those
Who are not disposed of, but who dispose;
Napoleon, Roosevelt, Henry Ford,
The autocratic whose assured
Magnificence may justify their darling pose.

But time in dealing with these splendid figures
Touches them as candidly as pimps or beggars,
Shows up the trickery, the engineered fall,
The dirty words on the lavatory wall,
The treacherous agreement and the lucky wagers.

Nothing is here to alter or disturb
My search for the active or the passive verb,
But in this garden sitting at ease
Under the tangled curling trees
I recall the awkward omens, those that still perturb.

Julian Symons

In a life looking backward the eventual course
Was selected in childhood by the sense of loss
Involved in leaving a familiar room,
The remembered wickedness, remembered doom,
The offence against the Holy Ghost committed twice.

Looking in childhood through uncandid eyes
I saw without emotion and without surprise
The splendid and remote ideal
Not wished, the shabby and the real
Accepted, the commonplace preferred to the wise.

In the garden playing soldiers I was in revolt
Against the second piece of marzipan, the heavy quilt,
Injustice that I did not dare
Object to, the unparted hair,
The stolen money lied about, the face of guilt.

Later in a schoolroom I learned to move
To a bell or a stick, be discreet and grave.
I was head monitor and knew the answer
To the difficult equation and the cause of cancer.
Swinging a cricket bat, I talked of love.

Fielding at short leg or at deep mid-on
I knew a life was over and a life begun,
Found that the agony of touch

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Goes further than the tongue can reach
And the silence and the gesture and the word are wrong.

For behold the fingers' fluttering, the body's shiver,
The darkened mind is wondering why or whether;
Love is not Beauty or Creation
But vacant as a railway station
Is existent only in the will of the lover.

Educated now to the dream and the distortion,
The truthful lie and the sincere evasion,
The subtle and particular charm
That mothers us and works us harm,
I examine my resources and review the position.

Too late for me now the uncomplicated faith,
The raised-fist marching and the missionary death,
The accurate scientist straight as a crow
Cutting a path through rock or snow,
The wonderful illusion or the simple life.

For the sensitive heart and the cultivated mind
Know the fairy tale is false but will never lift the blind
To us, the skeptical and calm,
The dream is final, and we come
To face the deadly faces in a hostile land.

Julian Symons

Yours is not my world then, I shall be in opposition
To the gay recruits singing and the barked decision.
You whom I laugh with, live with, love,
Will find that when the barriers give
I shall fight against you in the hopeless action.

In the meantime I can give you the tree's tall shadow
Threatening the garden, and the mind's pathetic meadow;
I can give you the attractive lunar valley
Where the lucky rest in Gambler's Folly
And enchanted bodies wait under the crying willow;

I can give you the heart's eagles and the singing bough,
The swan song of a dying world, its clatter and row.
What an eye can see and a brain record
And a hand put down in a halting word,
Sitting in the garden I can offer you now.

Julian Symons

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QUIET MORNING

STONE WALLS

Stone walls seem gathered not by men
But by some older force,
As if the hills had driven them
In slow flocks from the grass.

And since the heavy boulders come
Of low and ancient birth
They never learn the will of men
To stand aloof from earth

But peacefully disintegrate
Under the orchard boughs
And up and down the pastures
Beside the dozing cows.

THE UNKNOWN

In mystery the ocean's heart
Pulses green and azure stains
And all the teeming creatures dart
Like corpuscles along its veins.

Elizabeth Bohm

Its mockeries of air conceal
Soft forests terrible with teeth;
Squids' chilly pearly eyes; the eel
Ribbioned in a deathly wreath;

And little silent stars that creep
Among the rocks, give birth and die,
Like dreams within the watery sleep
Washing all their millions by.

The plantlike clam, the living star,
Were old before men saw the sun;
Before huge lizards tracked in tar
Their brief development was done.

As cool as midnight and as wide
With thoughts we do not understand,
In slowly gleaming folds the tide
Draws its curtains on the sand.

WASTE

Beside my foot the world of sand is specked
With tiny empty shells. It is all one grave.
There are purple dots, and white, and yellow-flecked,
Bones of the infinite foundlings of a wave.

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With what a lavish loss the colored seed
Comes floating up the braiding surf to die!
O twirling snail and bottle-green sea-weed
And sound of foam, you cannot tell me why

THE MILKWEED POD

Someone tore this milkweed pod asunder
To find the wet white silk within, and plunder

In another week the leathered case would crack,
The globes inflate before their wide blue track;

Slowly the pod would open, letting fly
Transparent chains of pearls across the sky.

But unknown hands were curious, and so
Autumn cannot spend one purse of snow.

SEPTEMBER WATER

In the quiet sunlight of September
The harbor's top is blond and burnished stone.
Any swimmer who cuts that width of stillness
Is scorched with cold to the marrow of the bone.

The tide no longer rustles; only waiting
Holds it as a gleam holds dormant bells.

Elizabeth Bohm

It gives its calm attention to a pink crab
Or to the far-down pearl of mussel shells.

The swimmer floats over henna sand and brown sand.
The calico print of every pebble is clear.
He feels the faint hostility of winter
Flavoring the water with a fear.

Elizabeth Bohm

TO A STRANGER IN PASSING

. . . So spread we deathward, out; whirling apart,
Exploding, useless, lost: no faith can piece
The countless fragments of the central heart,
The shattered atom old, and bring surcease,
No love. Though all have tried through all the years,
Though force cries out to force insatiate,
The impulse conquers; distances and fears
Grow ever greater—we are separate.

Think not, my friend, that I would dwell alone,
Beyond your reach, behind my careful face,
If we could hope to talk, but this is known,
There is no way to close the inner space:
For all the facile words at our command,
There is no language two can understand.

W. G. Van Keuren

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TWO POEMS

CARNIVAL

I have seen the crowds fade away
and the ferris-wheel come
to a creaking halt
and the engines gasp
their last weak sputter—
I have seen the lights dimmed
and the stands covered up
and the last explosive car
spurt into darkness.
I have heard the parting shouts
echo into fantastic silence.
I have seen the trampled grass
smothered in the oppression
of loneliness and the crickets
come forth—I have seen the night
reclaim its own.

QUEENS

A star upsets and swims into her purple
eyes but she is not alone with her desire.

A social feeling agitates her friend:
"Rosie, if you pick that rose, I'll tell!"

Herman Gund

"O can't I pick a single one?"

"I'm going!" is the oblique no.

Such cowardice has force upon the bold.

Unplucked the rose remains.

"I wish our garden had a rose," says Rose
and to her thornless garden wishing goes.

Herman Gund

INBRED

Now gazing sideways toward the sea
of battered light and boisterous sound,
somehow a vastness suddenly
crowds back the narrow walls of me—
breathless, I look around.

What had been flat monotony
of sky and sea and passive shore,
now blinds me with new brilliancy—
I had forgotten these could be
my blood and brain once more!

Carl Bomberger

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THREE POEMS

CIRCULAR PATTERN

From my high window I see
white smoke blowing and
black smoke blowing and
sea-gulls flying and
river flowing
and men high up, aloof,
mending a roof.

And white men spading the ground
and black men spading the ground;
I hear the pick-ax's sound;
I see the day unwound.

And white smoke ploughing the air
and black smoke ploughing the air
and vanishing there;
and bones deep in the ground,
cold and aloof
under a tight roof;
and I hear the pick-ax Time
chopping the clock's chime.

May Lewis

PROGRESS

Old, gay, she sat with me beside the burning log;
The comfortable dog lay at our feet;
We drank our tea. . . .

The room was filled with her;
Erect, alert,
One who had faced all challenges unhurt,
Who now was warmly, thoroughly fulfilled
With life as life had willed.
No droop betrayed the mouth
Nor slacked the muscles of the sensitive hand
That taut or tender at the hours' demand
Had moulded circumstance.
The eyes' quick glance, like a free bird
Direct from bough to bough,
Flew from the past, as we agreed that now
The angles of the world were strangely twisted:
"But it grows better," she insisted;
I raised a skeptic's brow.

"Ages ago," she said, "I won a prize
For geometric drawing."
The dim eyes shone:
"I noticed then: however fine the point of compass pen
Or firm the hand to close a circular line—

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The end, seen through a magnifying glass,
Invariably would overpass the start, a fraction:
The spiral's mounting action had begun."

She smiled: "A neat, authentic sign,
That unescapable upward twist
That flows, in spite of man,
Through the blind channel of the human wrist."

STRIKERS

Altogether these wills bind
and what was scattered forms into a wall;
the factory's iron mind
batters a barrier a thousand years tall.

These wills locked, stronger than iron or stone,
slow-gathering *At Last*, the imperative of the slave,—
they are not themselves but the future.
Nature has cast
and welded this pattern deep in the tidal wave.

May Lewis

MEDITERRANEAN

The iris twists its root within the socket,
Darkness burns in the desert air,
Under the shimmering rock small creatures leer,
Ruin moves like a squadron in the stars.

The neon lights reflected in the rain,
The rattle of the tram, the rolling train,
The emerald silence of the tropic bay,
Burn with the desperate currents of our time.

The world turns over: the cactus and the pine
Glint on the shining coast and desert frontier,
Battleships ride at anchor, and their hulls
Quench the blue sunlight on the dancing wave.

Here, as a man stands up
On the raised beaches of the world, Gibraltar stands,
The ships move east and west, the cactus burns,
And deeper currents move maternal ocean.

Michael Roberts

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THE PAST IS DRAGGING STATUES .

THE SPRITELY DEAD

There was a man within our tenement
Who died upon a worn down step of day:
The wreath they hung upon the doorway meant
That there was nothing else for him to do.
But he was obstinate, he would not rest:
He dragged the flesh of silence everywhere
On crippled wings, and we would hear him whirl
While on our memory's sill his eyes would roost.
We saw him wring his thoughts in deep despair
And stamp the color from our backyard scene:
Careless, without his body, he would peer
To find out if we noticed this new sin.
He was afraid, afraid: he climbed our vines
And hid, on hands and knees, along our veins.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

The patriotic day explodes, and ten million hydra heads
Swarm from the decapitated headlines on to the beds
Of the frightfully awake who climb down into halls of heat
While the exhausted weather butters out the street.

Oscar Williams

The people standing silently at the curb are waiting for
a bus:

Be careful, don't touch these people: this group is ominous:
If you look closely you'll see that they are not standing,
They are dancing, alive like lava, at time's ending.

The bus has just fallen on its studied rubber knees
And gulps these people through its national arteries:
It gets up with no neck broken or other defections
But casts haggard eyes, from both sides, in all directions.

Look further and you'll know it is riding an ocean of worms,
That the waves are self explosive and will not come to
terms:

Though these people are on their way to the day after
tomorrow,
They look over the edge to see from whom they can
borrow—

They want to borrow the timber for a raft of faith on the
deep
Where the baleful hydra heads make it seem appallingly
steep,
Where the wind is full of slag, and the heyday fireworks leap
Over the nation fitfully turning in its frightful sleep.

Oscar Williams

It is no rainfall splashing quoits—that's clear!—
It is a sound within the house we hear,—
The headline breaks, and out a nation gushes.

And bugles' clouds like giant mushrooms blow
Along the golden airways down the mind:
Out of our house oblivion's billows flow,—
The mills of the gods grind slowly, but not so
The appalling world upon the radio
Pouring its iron tides upon mankind.

And now, now, the machine now cannot stop
Exploding brimstone on the music's stair;
The earth is filling, filling to the top,
No room now for the cyclops in the shop
Nor elsewhere at the gargyle curtain drop
Of faces headlong on the final air.

PORTRAIT OF REALITY

The ear, a fox, emerges from a cloud
of thunder perched above the universe:
the European headline in the crowd
crows copper morning from a hidden hearse.

Out of the flesh the jagged glass protrudes:
the sky is gleaming in the broken lenses

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tapping the blood of giant platitudes;
scarred by hallucinations, roam three tenses.

Through mists of moss, the future's tom-toms come:
the past is dragging statues through the rain:
the present lives in spirals, hiding from
the starlight at the eyeballs of the brain:

the Buzzard's two great eyes of sun and moon
pop from the iron forehead of high noon.

MAN AND SQUIRREL

I walk through soggy hallways of the rain
And, past the bins of dried up daily bread,
Meander to the pavements of the dead
With a glass squirrel chewing in my brain.
Its trembling paws adroitly turn and nurse
The fastened thought upon its screwed up features,
And with the long range eyes of silent creatures
It looks right through me at the universe.

There comes a sound of planets and of power
Upon the sloped horizon's grassy eaves:
And can I stand, and will the brain endure

Oscar Williams

With stars stampeding down my final hour?
Of this, however, I am not quite sure.
My squirrel scurries up a cloud of leaves.

SUMMER DAY

There is a snowfall of daylight in my room:
Higher and higher it piles;
It falls on everything, deep into glow of wood,
Into the crevices it files . . .

Into shine of rug, up the books, against walls,
Sloping down mind, in blue air,
Layer after layer, mount these flakes of radiance,
Drifting everywhere,—

Until I'm suffocated under the snow hills of light,
And my veins would freeze
And I'd be buried but that I run for shelter
Under the deep awnings of green trees.

Oscar Williams

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THE GOD IN THE CAR

EVERY analysis of modern literature that strives to be serious reaches somewhere in its course a discussion of the social crisis. It is by this question that the focus of contemporary minds is measured.

For poetry, the crisis appears in a dual form—as a material crisis and as a crisis of faith. The latter might be called the religious side of the crisis, the crisis in the image cast upon the mind by a world of unrest, which is expressed as a breakdown of faiths and loyalties. There is also the actual physical crisis: unemployment, suppression, war, social conflict.

The religious side of the crisis manifested itself in poetry long before the material one—in this sense the spirit has been prophetic. Bread-lines, strikes and working class organization are newcomers to poetry; worship and doubt have been large themes for many years. "*A qui me louer?*" cried Rimbaud in *Une Saison en Enfer*. "*Quelle bête faut-il adorer?*" To whom shall I hire myself? What beast must be worshipped?

While awaiting, however, the descent of faith, of the ravisher who would not find it ungrateful (to paraphrase La Forge), poetry acquired much knowledge, great and small. It discovered and noted concrete relations in many fields—objects, techniques, word-magic, sensations, dreams, Art. Feeling itself surrounded by vast forces, it searched all disciplines, enacted all doubts and convictions. A unique

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posture of alertness, in unexpected situations and in situations unexpectedly familiar, identified the various styles which became known as *modern*.

If this probing of the actual was intended to be provisional—until the apparition of the Beast to be worshipped—it had the effect of draining poetry of the unexpended spiritual gases accumulated during the early days of middle class revolutionary enthusiasm. It had the further effect of acclimatizing poetry within those orders of knowledge obtained through research and observation. No longer was the poet's *learning* conceived as the reflex of a pure poetic Ego; that nature had lodged the universal Truths within the hearts and biographies of poets remained the conviction only of those who adored poetry from a distance. Poetry's religious hopes had expressed themselves, more or less unwittingly, as a scientific foraging.

Yet, until quite recently, the poet's approach to science, history, politics continued to be *religious*—he appropriated from these studies only the myths which they projected within him. In themselves, these disciplines were felt to be dangerous and inimical to poetry. The poet feared being drawn away and alienated from himself, as all other producers of useful objects are subdued and made alien by their labors within the present organization of production.

Thus, if poetry became "pure" and detached from social activity and social responsibility, it was not through an act of perverse free will or inhuman callousness. The poet and his art were pushed into a corner by economic and social

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forces which he long ago recognized and hated, but the true human meaning of which he is just now beginning to understand.

Just now! For though its religious shadow still continues and no doubt will continue to follow it in the form of individual faith-seeking, poetry has at last come to focus its attention upon the real body of the social crisis. Today, poetry has begun to overcome its timidity towards historic and economic analysis, and even to find a deep fraternity with these enemies of yesterday.

Archibald MacLeish's *In Challenge Not Defense* (POETRY, July 1938) is therefore faithful to the temper of its time when it considers hunger and unemployment as a matter of concern for poetry. One might say that he had glanced at society from an economic and historical point of view before applying to its dilemmas the solvent of his poetic will. For to his mind the crisis "is a crisis of hunger," and, moreover, of hunger which the wealth of the modern world is capable of eliminating.

But having traveled to this point with the contemporary movement in poetry, MacLeish relapses at once into a retrogressive religious interpretation of modern life. With one quick glance at the real world of the crisis he returns to the search for the Beast. But now faith will save not only the poet but society as well. The very fact, MacLeish argues, that the material crisis is not imposed by the material poverty of mankind means that the crisis has no mate-

rial explanation and will not be solved by material means. Sufficient wealth exists, therefore wealth and the manner in which it is produced is not the problem.

The real "heart of the crisis," says the faith-seeker, is a spiritual matter, a question of Poetry. "The failure is a failure of spirit." Men must make themselves over, through poetry make themselves capable of belief.

From this premise MacLeish reaches the conclusion that history and economics have nothing to teach us. "Mathematicians of the mob," the province of the economists is the past. Fascism, however, has conquered economics and the past of Germany and Italy by a deed of the imagination. Historians are, by profession, partisans of necessity; but to poetic humanity all things are possible. If you wish authority for this MacLeish concludes, you may have it: it was Aristotle who "distinguished poetry from history," saying—"history draws things which have happened but poetry things which may possibly happen."

That for the first time in history the hunger and strife of humanity have no longer any material foundation is a great radical truth. It is a truth that was not discovered by poetry but by economic and historical analysis. As a major fact of our epoch, it has many human implications which we may expect poetry to reveal. With this knowledge as a starting-point poets will go far toward an understanding of the tragedies of the past, the present and the future. But having touched the physical reality of the modern world MacLeish leaps to cover its nakedness with

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the veil of religion. To him the contradiction of the world's wealth signifies—contempt for economic and historic necessity in the name of Poetry.

Filled with this contempt, the message of poetry becomes the old pulpit-admonition: "The failure is a failure of the spirit." "The entire cause lies in the hearts of men." Only God—the word alone having been changed to Poetry—will deliver us!

One would have felt ill at ease in stressing the logic by which MacLeish's assumption of the need to reject the understanding of historical process leads to the major conclusions of fascist thought. Whatever his reasoning, MacLeish is not a fascist, nor does he intend to aid fascism—and with individuals logic is often less significant than intention. So there would be no point in coupling MacLeish's ideas with those of the fascists had he not himself founded his spiritualism upon the accomplishments of fascism: "In Germany and Italy where men, some men, enough men to have power, have imagined life-like melodramas to take up the lack of life, the world's economists have been made to look like infants." Hitler, too, denies that it is possible to set a limit to the "creative" aspirations of the German folk.

MacLeish rejects the conception of the social and economic insolvency of Germany and Italy on the evidence that these countries have not literally fallen to pieces but have succeeded in arming themselves for murderous attacks in Spain and Ethiopia. To him a wave of life has been

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rolled up there by poetry, even if this poetry is deadly and destructive.

But what is this arming and murdering but the political program of economic insolvency? The events of the past few years have demonstrated conclusively that Super-Economics is driven along the road, not of Poetry, but of imperialist necessity. To accept fascism's victory over economic necessity is to ignore the historic compulsions which force it inevitably to plunge the world deeper and deeper into chaos. Further, to insist upon Germany's and Italy's "freedom" in this instance, is to charge all the crimes already committed by fascism to an inherent viciousness in the German and Italian imagination.

In discarding the scientific assertion of fascism's insolvency, MacLeish is like one who calls physicians quacks because a patient dying of cancer "never looked better in his life."

The faith and the image are everything, cries the poetic Challenger, the means, the tactics, are the concerns of paltry souls. "What this country needs is a good poem," said Herbert Hoover in 1932. "Its absence *is* the crisis," echoes Archibald MacLeish (his italics). "The issue between a planned economy and an economy called free is not an issue. . . . The fact that we can talk of them as though they touched the life and death of our society merely betrays the poverty of our minds. Actually the issue, the one issue, we should talk about is this: What do we love? To what do we desire to be loyal? Once we know the answer to that

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question everything will follow of itself."

A qui me louer? Poetry's old search for loyalties is thus projected into society as a whole. And by a quick reversal the poet-as-seeker is converted into the Poet Leader.

Here poetry flings into the discard all the great acquisitions of its doubts. By such pretensions it will empty itself of content and lose its capacity to learn from and participate in social events. For the nature of these events is determined historically and economically, not by poetic faith-seeking. There is no lack of desire in the broad masses—desire for peace, for security, for decent living conditions, for social participation. There is no lack of conviction in the people that they want freedom and education. It is the means they are seeking. And by feeling for the means with which to be loyal to themselves, the historic masses provide the answer of reality to the religious questionings of the modern poetic "tradition."

"The defense of poetry in this time is a challenge. It is a challenge to all those who quarrel about the means by which the people shall be saved to hold their tongues and be silent until the poets shall have given the people speech."

Surely MacLeish spoke these words without forethought. Yet when one considers what has happened in this country and in the rest of the world during the past few years, it is difficult to be patient with such insolence, no matter how "innocent." Take America alone: what was the original split with the A. F. of L. which enabled the CIO to organize millions of workers but a "quarrel about the means"?

What is the effort towards unity today but a quarrel about the means? What was the sit-down strike but a mass-invention of a means? One must have put aside past and present and fixed his gaze firmly on the problem of how to be "saved" to be capable of such contemptuous counsel.

Let it be said, too, that MacLeish was most misguided in quoting Aristotle as authority for his "poetic" notion that all things are possible. Aristotle's conception of the *content* of poetry—his conception of its rôle has to do not with possibility but with purgation—is the exact opposite of unlimited possibility. He said: "a poet's object is not to tell what actually happened but what could and would happen either probably or inevitably . . . one [the historian] tells what happened and the other [the poet] what might happen. *For this reason* poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts." (My italics. Fyfe's trans.)

No, not all things are possible. Possible is only that which is allowed or compelled by necessity. Poetry is truly poetry when its representation of events is more in accord with the inevitable than the mere accounts which passed as history in Aristotle's day. Poetry is great when it represents necessity, was the message of Greek dialectics. Not Aristotle but a sentimental and obscurantist pragmatism, in which the pleasures of inner stability are the sole measure of the good, is the source and authority of MacLeish's philosophy of free poetic possibility.

It is nothing new for poetry to issue "challenges." In a

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sense, the "challenge" has been the major subject matter of poetry during its entire modern career of social impotence. As poetry grew small and defenseless its illusions of its own significance often reached fantastic heights. The delivering of these challenges has never resulted either in fright or in any serious hostility on the part of the enemy. After a brief delay, due no doubt to his being busy with running the world, the challenged party has responded with applause and support for his poetic antagonist. Every Church is maintained by its spiritual foes.

In those epochs when poetry meshed into the wheels of history and exerted its power there it neither demanded nor pretended to a superior rôle. It mastered whatever science was available, mixed in politics, gossip and religion, and in order to know itself studied the past of humanity. The importance of poetry today, its challenge if you will, is in direct proportion to the obligations it assumes and the accuracy of its sense of the socially inescapable. Nothing was ever made glorious by adopting in advance of battle a posture of triumph.

Harold Rosenberg

A LETTER FROM ARCHIBALD MacLEISH

To the Editor:

Sorry I can't oblige with a reply to Mr. Rosenberg's piece. Very busy at the moment and besides it pretty well replies to itself. When you run into a blast like this you look for

A Letter from Archibald MacLeish

the animus. The animus is stated. It is insolence in me to suggest that the poets of this country must give form and shape to the imagination of the people because this has already been done. What Mr. Rosenberg means is that this has already been done by the Marxists. He may be right but the trouble is, as a lot of very wise Marxists can tell him, that the people of this country don't know it.

The rest is all pretty obvious. The straw man antithesis between "faith" and scientific economic determinism at the beginning won't fool anyone who has ever seen a straw man. Economic determinism is of course a "faith" itself—one of the most powerful faiths of our time. As for Hitler and Mussolini—it is comforting to know that they are really on the rocks. Someone ought to tell them. It would save the lives of a lot of American and English and other anti-fascists who are fighting them in Spain, to say nothing of the Spaniards themselves. All any of us need to do apparently is to sit back and wait for the collapse foretold in the books. If this were the general Communist position liberals who are making common cause with Communists against fascism would do better to stand alone. Fortunately it isn't. Communists know as well as other anti-fascists that fascism is a very real and terrible danger and precisely for the reason I state in the article Mr. Rosenberg attacks. There remains one last word of heartfelt thanks however. I am an unconscious fascist again. And I crib my ideas from Herbert Hoover. That really tickles me.

A. MacL.

ANOTHER CHANCE

THERE will be no amelioration in our verse writing until more attention is paid to melodic line in music, by the writers of verse.

The few composers who have wished to profit by what I have done in my operas (*Villon* and *Cavalcanti*) have not found a body of verbal matter already composed in English that could serve for the same ends. I mean, definitely, that the poetry just is not there to be set to music.

Chaucer had a lyric technique, Shakespeare used a lyric technique in his lyrics, but his dramatic verse was made to be declaimed, not sung. A lyric technique with *limited range* existed down through the time of Waller and Campion and to Rochester. Browning revived it in a few songs. A great many other literary poets simply did not use a lyric technique, or if they attempted it, did not develop it very far.

Without at least the rudiments of musical knowledge it seems improbable that anyone will develop it very far.

The present note announces the existence of a laboratory where a certain kind of constructive experiment can be tested. I am not advertising for musical genius nor in any way attempting to set limits to its activity. I am announcing an opening for men who have a certain sort of diligence and wish to direct it to a kind of musical labor not practiced in conservatories known to me, and which—to judge by their results and the tendencies in most current music—is

definitely (though very possibly unconsciously) opposed by them.

I am interested in melodic line. That is the part of music whereto the verse line can adhere. It is the part of music which is definitely part of the serious metrist's technique. To know what sort of verbal "melody" can be combined with and welded to the musician's notes, or whereto the latter can weld his notes, it is necessary to know more about music than the average versifier has for some time cared to know. Symphonic writing, the all too numerous attempts to conceal melodic inadequacy and incompetence by a multitude of instruments or by a quite clever, though often very messy, alternation and variety of instrumental conjunctions does *not* assist in this exploration.

I am interested in composers who are willing to start writing for one, two or three instruments. When they have attained sufficient lucidity in that field, I am in a position to have their work played.

I don't mean that I want scraps and patches. I doubt if any young composer will find a better way of learning his job than via déchiffage of the bases of great masters, and the reduction of old music for small groups of modern and available instruments.

For the student of verbal melody, the fiddle is the modern instrument. And the violin sonata or reduced concerto is his most fecund field of experiment.

The new microphotographic processes, developed under

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the tutelage of Cuthbert Lee¹, utilizing the Argus Microfilm Reader, open, or are about to open, a field of opportunity to young composers who can not afford research in Europe. The work of Dr. W. Gillies Whittacker of Scottish Academy of Music, his editions of William Young and of Purcell, might indicate the lines on which I believe this work should proceed.

The stagnation in music publishing is due, in part, to the decades wherein music has been a separate interest, not an integral part of the most active intellectual life. With the reintegration of the arts there should be a considerable stirring up of the reading of music, even among those of us who don't perform it even in private.

The lucidity of Vivaldi's MS., for example, can give considerable pleasure even if one read it in silence far from an instrument. Failing adequate publishing facilities, I can at least obtain performance for work that touches a certain level. And when the work has been tested in performance it should be easier to rouse a publisher's interest.

I should be glad to see (in particular) reductions of Dowland, Jenkins and Vivaldi for fiddle and keyboard, or for two fiddles and keyboard, plus 'cello, or for fiddle and 'cello, or two fiddles without keyboard. Naturally the simpler the combination the easier it is to obtain a performance and a high degree of precision in the performance.

I am not proposing this as a separate activity, nor do I

¹Science Service, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D. C.

suggest that anyone should give up writing poetry to take to music. I am suggesting this as exercise for young poets who want to learn their own job. National minstrelsy cannot be the work of one man alone. The sprouting generation should see that Vachel Lindsay was right about some things, not in contradiction to, but supplementing the dryest and most pedantic experiments made by the undersigned back in 1910 or 1911 in verse forms. The imagist activity consisted in getting rid of verse-slush and too many adjectives. As soon as this was done there set in a counter-current toward obesity. There is no need to give up any good quality. Poetry cannot however be made by the mere omission of one or more parts of speech. A knowledge of strophic structure could and should assist in the invention of structure. The work on musical form should lead to verbal composition fit to be set to music.

Extra Pound

REVIEWS

A LOST ADDRESS

Selected Poems, by John Gould Fletcher. Farrar & Rinehart.

“WHO recalls the address now of the Imagists?” asked MacLeish in his *Invocation to the Social Muse*. Those of us with long memories recall a hospitable place, where several people having no real business there temporarily checked their poetic luggage. Among these was John Gould Fletcher. From the first it was obvious that this

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author, while interested in technical experiments, cared little for the principles of the group with which he was associated. The present volume emphasizes his divergence from them. There is not a poem in the book handled with the directness, the terse precision, that mark the best work of the school, and while some of the early poems are written in "the sequence of the musical phrase", the later ones incline to follow "the sequence of the metronome". Nevertheless, Fletcher's *Selected Poems* offer, in however oblique a manner, a tribute to imagism. For they exhibit, on page after page, the faults against which the group so loudly, so vigorously, and not altogether vainly, inveighed.

Throughout the volume one finds the helpless elision, the ineffective inversion, the careless cliché. On the first page "gainst" appears twice, nor does the poet hesitate later to write "mid", "neath", "gain", or to speak of thickets "where once *did* climb the wild grape-cables". Such banalities as "You were I and I was you", "haunted by hopeless sin", are not exceptional. In the midst of a piece of rhymed prose, the flexible form of which should encourage lively writing, Fletcher shamelessly asserts, "Life is a dream". Some pieces are marred by rhetorical vagueness, exemplified in

Towards the impossible,
Towards the inaccessible,
Towards the ultimate,
Towards the silence,
Towards the eternal,
These blossoms go.

Others make flat prose statements without the saving

touch of a concrete detail, as in the poem mysteriously entitled *Elegy on the Building of the Washington Bridge*:

There is a bridge before us we have need
To build; a bridge whose links
Are consciousness, whose roadway faith, whose anchoring towers
Are the flesh acting and the mind that thinks.

Was there a poet once who wrote about "the pierless bridge" of faith? Was there a poet who hymned *The Bridge*? Shades of Emily and Hart Crane! Do you laugh or weep?

The book holds a few pieces that continue to please, either by the splendor of their imagery or the richness of their internal rhymes. Thus, one returns with delight to the third section of the opening piece, *Irradiations*, a passage which is indeed a complete poem in itself:

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.
Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing
Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades.
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light.
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards,
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,
The sun broidered upon the rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

The Blue Symphony, another early poem, contains a passage that skilfully evokes the cold charm of a goblin stream:

One chuckles by the brook for me;
One rages under the stone.
One makes a spout of his mouth;
One whispers—one is gone.

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One over there on the water
Spreads cold ripples
For me
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees
Flow like blue veils
Of tears
Into the water.

Sour sprites,
Moaning and chuckling,
What have you hidden from me?

But not content to conclude here, the poet adds another six lines which blur the picture. *Clipper Ships*, a prose poem, opens stirringly: "Beautifully as a tiered cloud, skysails set and shrouds twanging, she emerges from the surges that keep running away before day on the low Pacific shore." But this vividness is not sustained. The two other pieces of symphonic prose, *The Old South* and *The Passing of the South*, are nearer prose than poetry, and the casual rhymes are obtrusive.

The penultimate section of the book consists of thirteen elegies, on a variety of subjects which include a transatlantic voyage, the Jewish people, Thomas A. Edison, an empty skyscraper, the Russian revolution, Tintern Abbey, and The Last Judgment. Just why Fletcher chooses to call these effusions "elegies" is not clear, though some of them are mournful enough. It is in these ambitious pieces that one expects to find the poet's attitude toward the problems of his generation stated or implied, but it is not clear whether he hopes for "the great renewal of the coming spring" that will flower out of revolution, or whether he shares the bleak

A Lost Address

view of Thomas Hardy, to whom he dedicates *The Black Rock*. It is evident that he admires such intransigents as Columbus, Blake, Nietzsche, and Whitman, but the volume fails to reveal any integrated philosophy. It is interesting to note that one looks in vain for an expression of the viewpoint stated in *I Take My Stand*, the manifesto of the southern agrarians with whom Fletcher at one time allied himself.

The book is flawed, however, less by the poet's failure to declare himself than by the weakness of his execution. The good work fails to balance the shocking faults of the volume as a whole. Oddly enough, Fletcher saw fit to exclude some of his neatest work, as, for example, the delicate hokkus from his book of *Japanese Prints*. While rejecting the lessons that the imagists could have taught him, he has apparently failed to heed the instructions of the symbolists. His is neither the chiselled line nor the musical nuance. He lost an address that was worth remembering, and in all his further peregrinations found no better home.

Babette Deutsch

MORE OF THE SAME

New Writing V, Spring 1938. Edited by John Lehmann.
London: Lawrence and Wishart.

In this fifth number of *New Writing*, edited by John Lehmann, by far the most interesting material is that which deals with the lives and work of those who are actively and consciously engaged in promoting the life of the world to come. From Spain, from China, from Germany, where

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the forms of the struggle are most dramatic, come these soundly written and heartening reports of human decency and bravery. Why not come right out and say that the most interesting material in this book is that which has to do with the lives of members of the Communist Party? This would, perhaps, be unfair to Christopher Isherwood's story, *The Landauers*, but even here the reader is not explicitly satisfied that Bernhard is not a Communist.

On the other hand, without insisting on cheeriness as an esthetic canon, some of the case histories, the tales of village idiocy, the photos of proletarian life, seem to me pretty dreary. These have a tendency, I think, to backfire, and to present pictures of the author rather than the object at which he is presumably aiming; their formulae testify to the prevalence, in letters, of the phenomenon of projection. It is not unrealistic, I trust, to suppose that the working class is a valuable instrument of social change precisely because it is not as nervous, dispirited, work-sodden and woe-begone as its sympathetic observers among intellectuals are sometimes inclined to make out. Two of the Russian stories in the collection, the one about shock-tempo, and the one about the housing crisis, (this latter to be particularly commended to those who think anybody there who criticizes the government gets stood against a wall and shot), have a savor and gusto that should be held up to those proletarian writers this side of social change as something more than a mere matter of before and after taking. A third Russian story, *Liompa*, by Yuri Olesha, illustrates that the simple declara-

More of the Same

tive sentence contains, among its other possibilities, that of tedium:

A rat appeared in the dustbin. In the kitchen they were cooking chipped potatoes. The primus stove had been lit. The life of the primus stove began splendidly: a torch reaching up to the ceiling. It died a short blue flame. Eggs were jumping in the boiling water. One of the lodgers was boiling crayfish alone. He picked up a live crayfish with two fingers by its middle. The crayfish was a greenish watery color. . . . Two or three drops of water suddenly leaked from the tap, by themselves.

This is not all.

Poetry does not stand out in this collection. C. Day Lewis is represented by three characteristic homilies; Stephen Spender by translations of the German Bertold Brecht, and the Spaniard Miguel Hernandez. This poet, whose work has been translated on our side the Atlantic by William Carlos Williams and Willard Maas, is, for all his violence and rhetorical fury, a vital and passionate young writer. The other English poets in the present collection include Kenneth Allott, Randall Swingler, and R. B. Fuller. Their work, while not as sharply incised as the writing of W. H. Auden (who is otherwise unrepresented), nevertheless is definitely stamped with his imprint, as is likely to be that of every young poet today whose mind and ear are at all sensitive. Either that, or Auden has heard more acutely and rendered with sharper point the circumambient voices of the British isles.

The mind divided from the working body
Looks in the bowels and will find them foul:
The accurate response is never ready

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And like a drunken lady
That foggy membrane called the soul
Totters along shamefaced and sham and shoddy.

Or:

It is not the gaiety nor the psychic hope
That save us or renews us at this time.
Illusion can be blown to any shape
Of pleasure, wit, or sleep,
Yet though it be intense as steam,
When it condenses, we shall only weep.

In such speech it is easier to recognize current than individual idiom.

Rolfe Humphries

WELL-MADE LYRICS

Winter-burning, by Lindley Williams Hubbell. Knopf.

This is the kind of poetry that gives pleasure by fulfilling its own requirements. It knows how to swim in the musical element, but is less at home in the rhythm of blank and free verse, and does small things best. Its usual adequacy makes most criticism seem greedy.

Before passing to criticism that is unfair, there are one or two charges that can fairly be made. In the first *Sonnet*, in *City of Islands*, I and II, in *Three Letters*, and *The Akron*, the rhetoric strains but fails to capture the meaning alive, and most of the associations are sterile. In the small lyrics, the vocabulary is occasionally more brittle and abstract than it need be. "Elect," "expiate," "immaculate," "essential," "atomic," "intrinsic." The bony portion of Emily Dickinson's vocabulary appears so much lately in our lyrics that

Well-made Lyrics

we begin to feel these words are being used, not for their own sake, but because Emily Dickinson and a few others have used them well. Or perhaps it is her metaphysical turn that is here and elsewhere being overdone, for the same reason. But *Before Rain, Fenwick, Return, Christmas Card* are free of this fault, as of most others.

If it is the privilege of criticism to be greedy, the reader may ask why this book, as a whole, is unsatisfying. Take the lyric, *Old Books*. It rises proudly:

Sappho's dark hyacinth,
Prospero with his rod,
Achilles in his tent,
Saint Francis praising God:

but slides away: "That are more lovely than your life, More actual than you." And other poems end as follows: "Fears not dying, having died long since." "How in the end it will avail him nothing at all." "He is dead, my bird, he is dead." "The hands atug at the rope Are scarcely more than dust." And the heart

Finds image thus in the uneaten fruit,
The disappearing birds.

The mood of this poetry is the *carpe diem* which has been fertile for lyric poetry, because such poetry shone against a background of old age and death, and often achieved a tragic regret. *Winter-burning* grieves over the passage of time, but the regret is not tragic; only melancholy, because the time was passed almost for the sake of regretting.

Anne Channing

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

"EVERY WORD IS INTENTIONAL"

The World at My Shoulder, by Eunice Tietjens. The Macmillan Co.

The amazing thing about Eunice Tietjens' book of reminiscences, *The World At My Shoulder*, is the great variety of experiences it records. She was born in Evanston, and if there is or was a perfectly fresh-water creek in the whole of America it is that suburb of prohibition and evangelism, where Frances Willard held forth for so many years. But the strange American psyche turns up in unpredictable ways. The youth born in Ipava, Illinois, dies in India, and his ashes are scattered on the Ganges. From the far west came John Reed who found his grave near the Kremlin. George Cram Cook lies somewhere in Greece. This shows that fresh water clams originated in the sea, and that some of them retain salt which eventually carries them back to ocean water. From a reading of this book one does not get the idea that Eunice Tietjens has been a restless spirit. But that she has been venturesome and keen for adventure is plain enough.

Her father was a banker who died under tragic circumstances, but who left enough for his widow and children to be comfortable upon. In Evanston she had for a schoolmate that Marguerite Wilkinson who during the days of poetic rage in America published anthologies and books of criticism. One thing to be noted is that Miss Tietjens' career has been interrupted again and again. Her father's death at thirteen

"Every Word Is Intentional"

sent her off to Paris in charge of a mother of strong vitality. It was during the days of the Dreyfus excitement. Afterwards there was Dresden, where Miss Tietjens discovered Ibsen's plays and Wagner's music. Then Paris again where at nineteen she married Paul Tietjens, the author in conjunction with Frank Baum of *The Wizard of Oz*. In Paris she knew Isadora Duncan.

The marriage was not successful, and after three years abroad she was back in Evanston, where she was fortunate in having the literary association of Henry Kitchell Webster, and later in Chicago of George Cram Cook. This was about 1911, when Francis Hackett was editing the literary supplement of *The Chicago Evening Post*.

With everyone who ever writes authentic poetry the time comes when the nature of poetry is revealed. One night Floyd Dell was reading "When the hounds of Spring are on winter's traces", and descanting upon that melliferous chorus. Poetry? Poetry is certainly that chorus, as the young then believed, and as the old believed with a confidence that nothing disturbed. But at that meeting Cook took down Whitman and read "Come, lovely and soothing death". We gather that it was the reading of Whitman that showed Miss Tietjens that poetry is a live thing, a vital, significant expression of the spirit of man. So she began to write verses herself. Swinburne was a great poet, but to other poets he passed only metrics, not life. It took old Chapman, after the richness of Spenser, to open the eyes of Keats.

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Through reading and through schools in America and abroad Miss Tietjens by this time was well read. She was a linguist too. And now the thing happened that took her the way for which she was prepared. Harriet Monroe founded POETRY, and everyone who was ready for that event had the chance to participate in its career. She joined the staff of POETRY, where she became friends with Sara Teasdale and Zoe Akins, Alice Henderson, Lindsay, and the men poets who in company with the women poets drew to that magazine like steel filings to a magnet. Her words about Harriet Monroe are tender and just, showing the sterling qualities, the genuine capacity for loyal friendship of that memorable woman.

It is impossible not to feel resentment at the interruptions in Miss Tietjens' life, considering her talent and the poems she has written, despite travels and illnesses. Her life in Japan and in inner China, and here and there in Europe, stored her mind with material for poems but deprived her of the tranquility in which poems can be written. Then came the World War, and she sailed to France as a correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News*. In France she went through danger and through hardship, and seems never to have quailed. One chapter in this book thrills with horror, and lifts with admiration for the courage that she showed in the face of great peril. It is the chapter entitled "I Ride with a Corpse", which tells of the death of Mademoiselle de la Valette, who carelessly picked up a harmless looking stick on a battle field. It was a kind of bomb, and its explosion tore

"Every Word Is Intentional"

the body of the unfortunate woman into pieces. Miss Tietjens all night went about from one military station to another trying to give the body burial, and at last braved all the pickets and guards on a long many-mile ride to Paris, where she delivered the body to relatives.

After the war she was back in Chicago, and on the staff of POETRY again. Then after a divorce from Tietjens she married Cloyd Head. This was fortunate in every way. For he is as brave as she is, as unreckoning of likely consequences, as indifferent to the need of money. They have lived in Tunisia, in the Sahara desert, whither they went on a purse that the average person would not trust as far as Grand Rapids is from Chicago. But always they came through happily. In Tunisia she and Cloyd Head saw the life which they made into the play *Arabesque*. The play had a Broadway production, and should have succeeded, one feels, after reading what it was about and what was done to it in its direction. The two of them were pretty well down after that flop, but they rose and went traveling again.

This is a very honest book, and of fascinating interest. It is fluently and beautifully written. Eunice Tietjens has seen what many writers have only imagined. Now that her travels seem to be over—far travels, at least—she can devote herself to poetry. In that field she has many fine poems to her credit. But above poems is the character of the woman, which for bravery, good will, sense of humor, uncomplaining endurance, has few if any parallels in the annals of American women.

Edgar Lee Masters

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

NEWS NOTES

The public interest in poetry gains momentum. One sign of this is the reception given to our recent *Federal Poets' Number*. The newspapers were unusually generous in the amount of space they accorded us. For example, Harry Hansen devoted a large section of his column in the *World-Telegram* to an editorial on the special issue, in which he commented: "There are few writers today arguing that poetry should be completely divorced from realities. Indeed, I have seen no competent statement of that kind in ten years. But Mr. MacLeish had a point to make—that poetry alone could fire the imagination with the vision of a new world and become again 'the one deliverer of the people' . . . The poems seem to have been chosen with great care, for few are combative and crude. There are several references to Spain, but in nearly every case the emphasis seems to be on literary value rather than timeliness." Richard L. Leekley, reviewing the WPA number in an impressive four-column spread in the *Minnesota Leader*, observed: "Many persons do not read poetry at all after they leave school. To those who left school ten and twenty years ago an exciting discovery is therefore in store. American poetry is slowly returning toward the essential core of living which most of us know well. This collection shows it." And Isabel Paterson, in the *Herald-Tribune*, took the issue as a text, or pretext, for a column of enjoyable ragging, in which she applauds Mr. MacLeish's sentiments but complains that the writers as a whole are doing little to solve the weighty questions they propound. Quoting a phrase from one of the poems, she suggests: "Why not consult the ectoplasm of Immanuel Kant?"

A particularly thoughtful and well-written review, and one calculated to arouse much controversy, was the article by Simon Wells in the *Daily Worker*. It begins: "The July issue of *POETRY* . . . confirms the knowledge that here, on a relief project, are some of the ablest poetic talents in America." But this review goes on to assert that "the great mass of poems . . . show a complete lack of forthright emotion, share the same practice of taking little droplets of reality and filtering them through layers and layers of irony and introspective analysis until all sense of something alive is lost . . . These poets, like the magazine *POETRY* itself, engaged in a battle for the freedom of the artist, but by not seeking a base in the battle for the freedom of the American people, merely ran

for the most part from Babbitt into the 'Wasteland.' They fought the academicians merely on the basis of language and form, and made of poetry an instrument so marvelously fashioned that it couldn't be used for anything, a cup so delicate that nothing could be poured into it. . . . We think these poets should consider carefully the questions raised by MacLeish. We do not think he has phrased the problem perfectly. In his eagerness to display the senselessness of oppression in the world today, and to bring home the fact that the greatness of an artist is measured by his greatness as a man, as a leader and thinker, he over-reaches himself. . . . But basically his challenge hits the mark, and it should be pondered deeply."

Poets who are contemplating book publication will be interested in a report on the publishing field made by B. A. Heim binder for the Poetry Society of America. Some of the leading publishers were asked to explain their policy in regard to poetry. Out of eleven who reply, seven show themselves more or less unfavorable to the idea of publishing books of verse by new writers. Three of these—D Appleton-Century, Lippincott, and Little, Brown—announce that they cannot consider poetry at all. Henry Holt & Company "publish from two to four books of poetry a year" and "would not be able to consider the work of unknown writers unless of unusual distinction" Dodd, Mead would welcome "one in a thousand." Longmans, Green "do not refuse to publish poetry, but would publish only what we feel to be a most exceptional piece of work." Scribner's "publish on an average about two new volumes of poetry a year."

Of those who respond more favorably, the Macmillan Company is "always interesting in considering manuscripts of poetry" and "will promise to give them careful attention." Alfred A. Knopf reports: "We do not limit our poetry publications to a definite number nor to established poets." Harper & Brothers "do not aim at a large poetry list" but "welcome new material for consideration at any time." And Farrar & Rinehart reply that "if a manuscript of poetry has outstanding quality and we are genuinely enthusiastic, we would publish it, even if we suspected that we might lose money by doing so."

It should be noted that several firms with outstanding poetry lists, such as Random House, Harcourt, Brace, Houghton Mifflin, Viking Press, Putnam's, etc., are not represented in this report. If replies from these firms had been included, the results might have seemed more encouraging.

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Amy Bonner is completing, for *POETRY*, a similar investigation of the magazine field, asking the editors of the leading American periodicals to formulate as clearly as possible their attitude toward poetry. Their replies are of interest not only as a guide to the specific verse requirements of the magazines, but for the insight they give into the reaction of the general reading public. The results of Miss Bonner's survey will be published in an early issue.

Two new quarterly magazines, both featuring the work of younger writers, deserve notice this month.

Seven is edited by John Goodland and Nicholas Moore at the Poplars, Taunton, England. It is publishing stories, poems, and book-reviews by British and American contributors, including such poets as George Barker, D. S. Savage, Ruthven Todd, J. L. Sweeney, and Keidrych Rhys. The format is well-designed and the work presented of high quality.

Acorn, a distinctly readable newcomer, also prints stories, articles and reviews, as well as poetry "from a socially progressive perspective." This magazine, which is edited by John Sidney and associates at 72 Barrow Street, New York, welcomes particularly the young unpublished poet. The summer issue brings to light some vigorous new talent and gives the reader good value for his ten cents.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ABBIE HUSTON EVANS was born in New Hampshire in 1881. She spent her childhood on the Maine coast, was educated at Radcliffe, and served overseas with the A.E.F. during the war. She is the author of two books of poems, *Outcrop* (1928) and *The Bright North*, just published by Macmillan. In 1930 she received our Guarantors Prize.

OSCAR WILLIAMS, a New York advertising man, published his first book of poems in 1921, when he was twenty years old. At that time he stopped writing poetry and did not begin again until 1937. His poems have appeared recently in *The New Republic*, *Life & Letters Today*, *Scribner's*, etc., and in the *New Anthology of Modern Poetry* edited by Selden Rodman.

MICHAEL ROBERTS, the well-known English poet, was editor of *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* and is the author of a recent prose volume, *The Modern Mind*, reviewed in our May issue by Reginald Denney.

Notes on Contributors

MAY LEWIS, a native and resident of New York City, has contributed frequently to *POETRY* since 1925. A book of her poems, *Red Drumming in the Sun*, was published in 1931 by Knopf.

RALPH GUSTAFSON, of Sherbrooke, Quebec, but now living in London, was introduced to our readers last December. He is the author of a book of poems, *The Golden Chalice*, and of a play in verse, *Alfred the Great*.

HERMAN GUND has done editorial work in New York and Pennsylvania since graduating from Columbia in 1935. His poems have appeared in various magazines and anthologies.

The following poets make their first appearance here:

JULIAN SYMONS is a member of the younger group of English poets and editor of *Twentieth Century Verse*. He is preparing an article on W. H. Auden, to appear in a future issue of *POETRY*.

ELIZABETH BOHM, of New York, was born in London, the daughter of the American painter, Max Bohm. Her poems have appeared in *The North American Review*, *Commonweal*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, etc.

CARL BOMBERGER is a teacher of English in the Pleasantville, N. J., Senior High School.

W. G. VAN KEUREN was born twenty-five years ago in Pittsburgh, attended Pennsylvania State College, and has lived for the past fifteen years in Watertown, Mass.

This month's prose contributors are all familiar. HAROLD ROSENBERG, of New York, has appeared frequently here as poet and critic. He recently edited the Federal Writers' Project number of *Direction*. The essay by ARCHIBALD MACLEISH in our July issue, to which Mr. Rosenberg replies, was one of the most widely quoted articles ever published in *POETRY*. Although resident in Europe for the past thirty years, EZRA POUND has played a dynamic part in the American poetry movement. His most recent book is *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (Farrar & Rinehart). EDGAR LEE MASTERS, author of the famous *Spoon River Anthology* and many other volumes, has been a contributor to *POETRY* since the earliest years. BABETTE DEUTSCH, whose latest group of poems appeared in our August issue, is the author of the critical study, *This Modern Poetry*. ROLFE HUMPHRIES was co-editor of the anthology of war ballads, *And Spain Sings*. He was recently appointed to a Guggenheim Fellowship. ANNE CHANNING, who has appeared previously as a poet, lives in Hubbard Woods, Ill. She is the wife of the painter, Fairfield Porter.

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

The Bright North, by Abbie Huston Evans. Macmillan Co.
The Spider and the Clock, by S. Funaroff. International Publishers.

Mirrors of Venus, by John Wheelwright. Bruce Humphries.
Salutation to Valediction, by Sherry Mangan. Bruce Humphries.
My Cape Cod, by Sarah Dixon. Bruce Humphries.

Third Person, by Brian Coffey. Europa Press, London, England.
Lyrics of the Nile, by C. B. Ashbee. Oxford University Press.

Spectrum, by Elvia Graham Melton. Chapman and Grimes, Boston.

Poems, by Charlotte Corbett. Antioch Press, Yellow Springs, Ohio.
Poems, by Greta Rowell. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford.

Stationary Verse, by Delacourt Kell. Saunders Studio Press, Claremont, Calif.

Idle Hours, by Lise Perrilliat Fowler. Arthur H. Stockwell, London.
Selected Poems, by Mary Gray. Priv. ptd., Hartford, Conn.

Masks and Gypsy Music, by Amey Smyth. Poetry Publishers, Philadelphia, Pa.

Smoke Around the Sun, by Gladys Brown Denison. Henry Harrison.

Verses, by Evalyn Schaffie. Henry Harrison.

This Living Urge, by Lorraine Patterson. Henry Harrison.

Many Voices, by Helen Wieand Cole. Henry Harrison.

Out of the Bog, by Harold Strong Gulliver. Henry Harrison.

Rhymes of the French Regime, by Arthur S. Bourinot. Thos. Nelson, Ltd., Toronto.

Eleven Poems, by Arthur S. Bourinot. Priv. Ptd., Rockcliffe, Ottawa, Canada.

Challenge to Fear, by Leslie Ault. Branch Publishers, Woodstock, N. Y.

First Sun, by Leo Joseph Allard. Whitney Press, Buffalo, N. Y.

Moods of the Moment, by Thornton Lovelace. Arthur H. Stockwell, London.

Midstream—Midnight, by Robert Goldsborough. Priv. Ptd., N. Y. C.

ANTHOLOGIES:

The Silver Branch, An Anthology of Old Irish Poetry, edited by Sean O'Faolain. Viking Press.

Winged Cargoos, edited by Dion O'Donnol, Odell Francis, and Eugene Phillips. Wagon & Star, Los Angeles.

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